



**Kula
Manu
2011**

Kula Manu 2011

Department of English

Brigham Young University–Hawaii

Cover art “Splash” by Lisa Webster

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Editor's Note

The 2011 Kula Manu presents a beautiful collection of writing, art, and photography from all aspects of the Brigham Young University-Hawaii community. An eclectic grouping of the submissions we received are respectfully published here, through which we hope to encourage the acknowledgement of local artists, whose efforts are appreciated. We commend all of the contributors for their impressive talent and their willingness to share it with the Kula Manu.

A special thanks to Myrna Marler and the Kula Manu Staff for all of your involvement and hard work. We are also grateful for the assistance of the English Department and BYUH Print Services. Alohas.

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Pirate Booty

Lee Bungard

I used to work at the Pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disney World. If that doesn't wreak havoc on a guy's résumé, I don't know what does:

Work experience: I was a pirate.

Job related duties: Experienced in burning cities and pillaging villages.

I've worked some nice, prestigious jobs during my time at Disney. This wasn't one of them. But the ride is my favorite and I had a lot of fun during my time as a pirate.

One stormy night I was working at the load dock. We were about to close the ride. There weren't too many guests left in Adventureland due to the storm. The guests slowly trickled into the building.

A wench named Ophelia was in the control room (I'm not being rude. The guys were known as 'pirates' or 'mateys' and the girls were known as 'wenches'). The control room is a cool place to work. There are ten closed-circuit TV monitors where the worker can view different areas of the ride to see if anything's going on that shouldn't be happening. There is power in that position. The worker feels omnipotent when working there because she can stop boats in certain places, she can get on a microphone and yell at people who are on the ride and she can even shut down the ride if there is a problem.

The microphone has buttons next to it that determine into which area announcements will be heard. The worker can speak to people in just one area of the building at a time. She can also push a button and talk to everyone in the whole ride (that's nec-

essary when the ride shuts down due to technical difficulties and an announcement needs to be made to everyone).

I loaded some guests onto a boat. Several boats went empty after that and then it was time to close. At closing time, the load pirate has to get on a boat and ride through the attraction to give a final inspection to see if anyone has jumped out into the pirate scenes (people do this to get pictures with the pirates). He also has to do this 'ride-through' to see if anyone has thrown any garbage into the water, to see if any of the pirates are malfunctioning, etc. I rode my boat, very far behind the next boat that had people in it. My boat got to the down-ramp and I decided to 'surf' the waterfall. We pirates like to stand up as the boat goes down the hill because it makes the ride more exciting. I knew the point where Ophelia could no longer stop my boat. Had I stood up before that point she could have stopped me and yelled at me for standing (not that we ever listen to the control tower pirate's instructions. We were pirates, for Pete's sake. Did you expect pirates to listen?).

I was standing up, Ophelia knew she couldn't stop my boat, she knew the closest guests were so far away that she could get on the microphone and yell anything she wanted to without others hearing her so that's what she did. She pushed the microphone button and yelled, "Sit your booty down!" (I won't tell you the colorful expletive she used in place of the word 'booty'). I didn't sit, again because I never listen to the control room worker anyway but this time I also didn't sit for another reason-Ophelia wasn't pushing the right microphone button. She broadcast her rude little message into the unload area where a boatful of people had pulled in and the guests were starting to stand up. Looking on her TV monitor and seeing that I wasn't sitting as the boat got closer and closer to the top of the waterfall it was about to go over, Ophelia pushed the button again and this time she said, "Sit you're booty down now!" (again, not using the word 'booty'). I never heard her because she was broadcasting her high decibel loveliness into the wrong area. She never looked at the unload TV monitor to see angry disembarking passengers yelling at and gesturing towards Neal, the poor unsuspecting pirate who was working at the unload dock.

Neal, unfortunately, didn't give them the best guest service recovery that's ever been seen. He picked up the phone and yelled at Ophelia right in front of the guests: "What in the h—are you doing?" Oblivious to the trouble Ophelia was causing, I continued sailing through all the pirate scenes and listening to the music:

Yo ho, yo ho, a pirate's life for me.

We pillage, we plunder, we rifle, and loot,

Drink up, me 'earties, yo ho.

We kidnap and ravage and don't give a hoot,

Drink up me 'earties, yo ho. (©Disney)

We should have given a hoot. We were all sweating bullets for Ophelia. We thought she'd be walking the plank for sure, but no one complained. The wench got to keep her job and we never let her hear the end of it.

The Ultimate Tardy Excuse

Briana Nicholson



The Dinner Table Gauntlet

Issa Black

“Ugh. Ew. I’m not eating that!” rang out amid the chaos of getting three children, my workaholic father, and our determined domestic queen to the dinner table. That specific chorus at first featured Cara, the youngest sibling, Matt, the middle child and myself, the oldest.

Over time, the chorus thinned out due to enforced parental threats of second helpings. We’re not dumb; the chorus slowly became a solo starring Matt.

I am sure that my parents chose to institute martial law at mealtimes with the best of intentions. My mother abhors picky eaters, an attitude inherited from my grandmother, who was raised during the Great Depression and for the rest of her life practiced frugality as if it were a religion. The tradition continued with my mother finding ways to use every bit and type of food, from milk that had gone off to cream of wheat in brownies, while my father acted as her muscle-bound enforcer. In her defense, she only cooked food that she believed to be healthy and enlightening to our taste buds.

One of the earliest dishes of this ilk that my siblings and I learned to survive was liver, a favorite of my parents to this day. I discovered, with no other option in sight, that enough ketchup made it possible to choke the liver down. My sister learned how to turn her tastes buds off and swallow as fast as possible. My brother, however, chose to starve until he could do one of three things: put it off eating the liver until my parents forgot; convince my sister, the dog or myself to eat it; or make it disappear in the powder room.

The bathroom was the death chamber for food non-grata. Matt discovered that flushing food down the toilet was utterly

necessary. The first time Matt disposed of food in the powder room, he threw the offensive shrimp in the trashcan. Dad and Mom cottoned on and lost control. They took the shrimp from the garbage can and forced Matt to eat them. The episode is still legendary. After the incident, Matt never forgot to flush again. This method was his preferred choice for all of the many foods he refused to soil his mouth with, including, but not limited to, cow's tongue, hot and steamy romance stew (cow's heart in a beef broth with vegetables), tomatoes, anything containing coconut, bananas, and strange textures in general. He was probably the only boy in America who wouldn't eat pizza because it was "contaminated" by tomatoes.

Mom's guilt over being unable to cure Matt's pickiness was relieved slightly after we met the Porters, whose youngest daughter would eat nothing other than cheese and crackers. Claire preferred Velveeta and saltines. But that didn't mean my mother wasn't irritated with my brother when she found out that once again he had avoided eating something she had served.

The first instance was after the snow melted one year and I found the mass grave of breakfast fruit under the back porch. My mother was more upset about the waste of food than the fact that her son wasn't eating a balanced diet. The second was when my brother tried to hide a banana in my car while I was driving. That particular banana was leftover from breakfast. Matt, intent on not eating it, started to try to find a hiding space for it in the "sheep," my white Grand Am. Prior to leaving, Mom instructed me to make sure that he ate that banana, as well as cautioning against speeding since we were running late to piano lessons. Barely three miles from the house, after a slow left turn, Matt decided to hide the banana in the glove compartment. I tried to enforce Mom's edict and turned, taking my eyes off the road to scold him. In those few seconds, my car plowed into a silver Ford Focus that was stopped to make a left hand turn. I vanished the Focus's trunk and backseat, and accor-dioned the engine of the "sheep". This collision happened right in front of a State trooper and the local police stations. When Brighton Township police officer Barry showed up he didn't even need to see IDs. He took one look at Matt and I and

called my dad from his cell phone. When the volunteer fire department arrived to clean up the wreck, my mortification increased. All of the volunteer firefighters were fellow students at Beaver Area High School. And after all that, we still had piano lessons.

Matt, like Cara and myself, eventually discovered not only foods he could subsist on, but ones that are his favorites still. These foods were generally sweet, which make sense given that his first word was “candy”. They include Rice Krispy treats, ice cream, chocolate milk, parmesan cheese, and butter with some rice and pasta on the side. These foods are currently helping him survive on his mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They are also the only foods he can cook.

Cara found through taste and exposure that anything is edible and worth eating, except for black olives. I have no idea where or when she discovered this distaste but she still quietly removes them or avoids foods that contain them.

As for me, through luck and genetics I developed food allergies. I enjoy trying new foods, but as a child, I became allergic to pineapple, kiwi, avocado, banana, and all nuts (except peanuts, because they’re actually legumes). I’m also now a whiz in the kitchen. I create my own recipes and receive rave reviews from friends and family members.

Aside from our dislikes, Cara and I have discovered some of our favorite foods due to my father’s business travels: Limonade and McVite’s digestives from England, ginger beer from Australia, Brie cheese from France, and giraffe, gazelle and springbuck jerky from South Africa. We also discovered a competitive streak that drove us to see who could eat the most radical foods, including scorpion, whole dried shrimp, chicken feet, haggis, and blood pudding. The presence of these foods at the dinner table, whether they were liked or disliked, taught Matt, Cara and I that in the end, anything can be eaten at least once and sometimes, just sometimes, we might enjoy them.

Up, Up and Away

Jordan Forte



Mother's Day

Russ Toya

Brother Dismuke, the First Counselor in the Bishopric, asked me to speak in church on Mother's Day. He asked me to talk on Mosiah chapter four and to relate it to the topic of Mother's Day. I think I shocked the congregation when I opened my talk. I said:

"I was asked to speak on Mosiah 4 and how it relates to Mother's Day, so let's get right to it. Please open your scriptures to Mosiah chapter 4." I gave the congregation time to open their scriptures. "Please look at the top of the page. Look at the word 'Mosiah.' Now, if you look at the first and fifth letters of that name, you get the word 'Ma' . . . and that concludes my comparative study of Mosiah chapter four and how it relates to the topic of Motherhood."

I saw shocked expressions around the room before some of the people started laughing. But what was I supposed to do? Mother's Day isn't a time for a lecture. I could have lectured them:

"Verse 10 says, '. . . believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you . . .' Hey all you mothers! It says you guys should repent of your sins and start being humble."

Or what about the ever popular ". . . God at this time has awakened you to a sense of your nothingness, and your fallen state (verse 5). Hey mothers! Hear that? You guys are nothing to God! How does that make you feel? Happy Mother's Day!"

I just couldn't make the transition from scriptures that talk about our decrepit state of being to the topic of motherhood. Criminy! Brother Dismuke might as well have asked me to speak on Transylvanian genealogy prior to the 1400's and how it relates to Emma Smith.

So I went a different route. We needed some “lighten up” time. Mikell Jeppesen was our opening speaker and she gave the traditional I-am-a-14-year-old-girl-so-no-one-within-the-confines-of-this-room-can-comprehend-how-hard-my-life-is-right-now talk. You know the type of talk: “I have this, like, teacher, who really doesn’t like, like me you know, and she, like, gave me this, like, test, and I didn’t do so well on it which just isn’t like a person of my caliber with the higher, like, intellect that I have . . .”

I told some humorous stories, having to do with mothers, and I read some inspirational quotes and scriptures. It was a lot of fun sharing those thoughts with the congregation. They all laughed at my jokes and they were touched, spiritually, in the sections where I shared tear-jerking anecdotes. I was complimented on my talk.

After that we went into Gospel Doctrine class which I teach. Although I love teaching that class, there is one thing that worries me there: Eileen Gomez. She stirs up trouble. When she is in Gospel Doctrine class she always wants to be the center of attention and she argues and fights. Ever since I got this calling, I have prayed, throughout the week while I am preparing for the class, that I will be able to keep Eileen under control and that I will be able to maintain control of the class. Well, I guess I’m kind of beating around the bush in how I’m telling you this. To put it more bluntly, I pray that I will be able to get Eileen to shut her pie-hole when she gets out of line.

The lesson was on a subject that could be likened to Mother’s Day. I started the class by asking the members if they would please share some things that their mothers did that taught them gospel principles. Judy Stanley mentioned how her parents had an open door policy—anyone and everyone was always invited into their house. Another sister spoke of how her mother always had set the example of honesty—pure, 100%, nothing-wavering honesty at all times regardless of the consequence. Another told of her mother’s Christlike love.

Then Eileen raised her hand.

My heart skipped a beat and time stood still. A dog could be heard barking in the distance. I regained my composure and then I

mistakenly uttered those fateful words, the uttering of which will cause me eternal sorrow. I said, "Yes, Eileen?"

She told the class how she once made linguine with clam sauce and the cat ate it and died. You see, we learned that her family had 32 cats, only three of which lived outside, and Eileen got confused as to what a clove of garlic was. She needed to make her clam sauce with two cloves of garlic but she didn't know how to cook so she didn't understand that a clove is not a bulb so she cooked her clam sauce with two bulbs of garlic instead of with two cloves. Nobody could eat the linguine with clam sauce because it was so bad so she threw it away. When she later returned to the kitchen she saw that one of the cats had gotten into the garbage and therein lies the reason for the cat's unfortunate and untimely demise. Eileen's mother was horrified. But her father, who was tired of having thirty two cats (only three of which lived outside), whispered to Eileen's brothers, "I'll give you two dollars for each cat that ends up missing." The brothers, realizing an excellent financial opportunity, apparently dug the remaining linguine with clam sauce out of the garbage to feed the other thirty one cats, or perhaps they bludgeoned some of the cats with blunt objects or maybe they tied some of the surviving cats to the bumpers of cars that were passing through town that day. Who knows? But the boys were richer and the household was eventually rid of the cats and I would have to imagine that the neighborhood smelled a whole lot nicer without the smell of used kitty litter, but also without the smell of overly garlicked cat breath as well.

As a teacher, I try to be patient and understanding. I'm afraid I was perhaps a bit blunt with my exclamation of, "Hello, Eileen! Where are we going with this story?" She answered, "Oh . . . my mother is who taught me how to cook."

At that point I realized that I finally had the perfect opportunity to relate Mosiah chapter four to the topic of Mother's Day. I now felt that in this new context, the phrase ". . . awaken to your sense of nothingness . . ." was highly appropriate.

Amidst Rubbish

Conor Riley



Saturday Afternoon

By Hannah Cash

The influence of one action is immeasurable.

So smile.

The influence of one life is incomprehensible.

So live.

Carol Lamb tucked her six year old grandson into the booster seat in the back seat of her car.

"So, hun, will it be fries or an Icee? Which would you prefer my clean shaven, handsome little grandson?" she said with an affectionate rub on the little boy's freshly buzzed head.

The child in the car wriggled around excitedly in his seat and with a dimpled jack-o-lantern grin stuck his face toward the woman, craning his neck, as the word, "Both!!" exploded outward as if new minted into existence. His feet swung wildly and he rolled his lower lip over his bottom teeth and began to croon noises in a way to amuse himself. The woman closed his door then got into the driver's seat as she said, "Both!! Well, I don't know, do you think you deserve it? Were you good at the barber's today?"

This was almost too much for the child as, still craning his neck in a giraffe like fashion, hands and feet now both whirling around chaotically, he nodded his head, the loopy grin still craving his round face, and the continuous droning being chopped into a rhythm with each nod. "Yes-es-es-es!!" he cried.

Carol chuckled, following with, "well, alright. Fries and an Icee it is then. We'll have to make sure and pick up something for Grandpa and Momma and Poppa and baby too what do you say?" Again the child beat his head up and down with the same profusion of noise and the car pulled out of the busy parking lot.

The woman, in her mid fifties, was still thin and had well defined curves. Her skin, like her curves, was smooth and soft though slightly baggy in a losing battle with gravity for over half a century. Besides the inevitable side effects of old age, the woman had kept herself well groomed. Her hair, a short bob, was a much lighter shade of her grandson's fiery red and her softly crinkled smile was an outward sign of her kindly heart.

During the drive she began to muse respectively about her son and daughter-in-law. Jeffrey had finished his intensive years of schooling over eighteen months ago and still hadn't found a job. Currently they and their two young children were living in the downstairs of Carol's own modest home. Thank goodness for that, she realized. The once grand family living had been handed down the family line for numerable generations. Jeffrey's student loans would take fifty years to pay off with the highest installment plan they could currently afford and the car payment wasn't an easy burden either. Still, they were doing the best they could, Suzette watching some of the kids in the area while he was working at the local grocery store still searching for the golden job he had been promised during all those years of school. What were they going to do? Then again, why should she or they be unhappy? Yes, their money was worryingly tight and she herself could do little to help with that but they as a family had seemed to grow closer. They appreciated each and every little thing so much more.

It humbled her. In all honestly, there was an unaccountable joy that surrounded the little family. Their happiness seemed so real and fulfilling that Carol was almost jealous of them.

Ryan Burstock's face was white and tense, the extreme poise of his features a habitual cover for his suppressed anger. His left hand glued a cell phone to his ear while he blindly looked down the green fringed slope of the mountain from the wooden balcony of his show case home. His right palm propped his frame against the railing as his body arched into the steady mountain breeze and his blowing tinted button down shirt sculpted the defined muscles of his lean, spindly body. The blue silk tie flew up to beat his

shoulder and billowing back then plummeted down to attack his stomach and sides.

He listened to the little speaker of the phone with an extreme intensity. His mouth opened and a few quick, controlled words were emitted like a vending machine; words the earphone voice had specifically wanted and paid for. In one smooth motion he shoved against the railing, righted himself, then turned to face the side of the house and began a slow tour of the platform with his spotless leather pointed shoes.

After a few laps, he came to rest again with his back against the same spot of railing and crossed his now ballooning torso with his right arm, tucking the hand under the left elbow. Under his thin rimmed glasses impregnable eyes followed the haphazard flap of his dark navy dress pants as they flitted around his crossed ankles. The sharply pointed nose flared for a barely a moment and after another minute the phone was withdrawn to reveal a red overused ear. The man, in his late twenties, turned with a heavy laden sigh to stare at the town, particularly one tall skyscraper in the distance, through the living frame of the mountains.

Dylan and Samantha peddled arduously up the increasing slope in front of them, the mountain's autumn breeze rendering the climb more bearable.

"You'd better be serious about that ice cream!" the young girl yelled ahead at her companion. The teenage boy rolled his eyes and replied with some slight puffing.

"I am..., I said that you could have it if you got up there..., before me!" With this the youth swiveled his head around to look at his sister with a jackals grin curling his lips.

"LIAR!!" the girl somehow managed to yell, her face radiating with an astounding red hue, "this was never a competition! You said that it was mine after-"

"Yeah," the boy cut her off, "but I went on a ride with you," he puffed, "consider it payment for my services!"

"Oh, so now what, are you a man-whore then?" came the sassy rebuttal. Annoyance flicked through Dylan's face for a

moment before he jeered back, "if I am I learned it all from you! Oooooohh!! Ha ha ha ha haaa!"

The girl behind's eyes narrowed as she began to push against the peddles, harder and faster, propelling her toward her competition until slightly past him. On either side of her the deep, leafy green walls all sped by with the same copious decoration and the carpet of asphalt, mossy laden rocks and undergrowth disappeared beneath her tires.

The car continued up the road as it began to slant upward. Carol's grandson sat in the back seat, happily munching on the rest of his fries, humming to himself.

"Grandma, can I have my Icee now?" He asked. The blue slush sat securely wedged in the cup holder close to Carol's right hand.

"No, hun. Not until we get home."

"Pleeeeeeeeeease! I'm thirsty!!" the child squealed, fidgeting with the greasy paper bag and scattering little fried crumbs and salt like confetti. Carol inhaled the delicious, oily scent of the fries, savoring it, before replying.

"No, hun, remember the last time? You accidently spilled it on the seat. Grandpa spent hours trying to get it out. I'm breaking the rules already by letting you eat in the car." She smiled in the rearview mirror at the boy, "Just wait until we get to the house. We're almost there!"

There was a heavy silence in the car for a moment then, "it's 4:44! Make a wish!" erupted from the back seat. Sure enough, Carol looked down at the little green digital clock and the acidic clad time that blazed forth. Make a wish? Well, Carol thought, maybe it's worth a go...

Straightening his dress jacket the lawyer stepped from his house into the gleaming Mercedes and began down the long and crafted picturesque driveway. Not a minute later, a whining ring cut through the car. The man glanced down at the phone then with one hand still on the steering wheel began to rummage around in the glove box. After a few moments of multitasking, he pressed the brake and directed his whole atten-

Break

McKenzie Fogg



tion to the task at hand. The phone stopped ringing and he vociferated a profanity. One more rough search through the little pocket and with exasperation he grabbed the phone as it began to sing again.

Still wearing his tight mask of forced calm, he nestled the phone to his left ear and continued through the serene driveway and onto the main road of the mountains. He glanced down at the clock. A pang of despair cracked through his mask and his body sagged as if under a heavy weight.

The siblings raced up the mountain, on to their home, each much more out of breath as the arduous climb took its toll.

"Geeze, Sammy... you had to pick biking, didn't you!"

"Aww, come on, lazy! You're just sore because I'm gonna get all that ice cream and you are out of shape... Remember last summer when we used to ride with Dad all the time? We were looking great then... and this part was a breeze!"

"Speaking of breeze... what the hell happened to it? I'm dripping in sweat!" There was a companionable silence between the two of them only broken by their steady panting. After a moment Dylan spoke up, "When we get up there... I'm gonna give you a big hug!"

"Ewwww! Don't! ... You're so disgusting! Seriously! ... I'm sweaty enough as is!" Another jackal grin was flung her direction and the pair continued on.

His eyes were now flashing and the hand that gripped the phone was white with tension. From the quiet world watching through the glossy windows, only the jerk of his head and the barking motion of his mouth were discernable, his mask of calm tension utterly cast aside. Trembling slightly, the man took minimal notice of the path in front of him and he inched off the shoulder of the road. Immediately he placed both hands on the wheel and took a moment to correct the vehicle.

Taking his left hand once again off the wheel to resume his conversation, it jerked half way back as the tires rolled over a patch of rocks. Down the phone fell, past the steering wheel and door handle until it landed on the rubber sole of the floor.

Already quick responsive due to the adrenaline racing through his veins, the man instantly reached down to pick up the phone, his guiding hand on the steering wheel following. He looked back up and let the phone drop to the floor unheeded.

“And, and then! Then, the whole plane exploded! Kapewwwww! Purowww! Shaaaaaaar!” words and sounds simply were not enough as the little boy flung his hands high in the air to better relate the scene to his grandmother.

“Well, really, Honey? That sounds so exciting!!” Carol replied, her gently wrinkled face swept into a heart melting grin.

“Yeah! It was SO cool Nana!” In her rearview mirror, the little boy was for once still, straining from his seat with eyes intensely fixed ahead of him and his lips pushed out in a comical expression of his honesty.

Motion caught the edge of Carol’s peripheral vision as a sleek black Mercedes suddenly appeared around the bend in the road, its front headlight in her lane by a good foot or two. With a panicked gasp, she yanked hard on the steering wheel, her face now white with wide stretched eyes. The shriek of tires split the calm mountain air.

Immediately after, an impact with a sickeningly shrill crunch as racing metal collided. Like watching a home movie where the cameraman doesn’t realize they are recording, Carol watched as the oncoming car, the road and the brush ahead of her spun chaotically through her window. What about her grandson? What about Joseph and the rest of her family? What about... ?

Suddenly a thick trunk appeared in her window. With another wail and groan of crumpling metal the car came to a rest. The show had ended

Everything was abnormally still; the window screen now cracked into a delicate spider web of a thousand pieces.

Joseph in the backseat began to cry.

“Oh, Yeah?”

‘Yeah! I... what is that? Did you hear that’

“Yeah, it sounded... what the- Emily! Look out! Oh my -”

The boy was cut off as the wildly rolling black car bounced and spiraled, beautifully, terrifyingly, down the mountain road to greet them.

The man's world spun as the tall, grey tree trunks shifted to become horizontal then vertical in a dizzying kaleidoscopic spiral. His window was beaten smaller and the glass shield became a sprinkler as millions of glass droplets showered his face and the outside world. The phone jumped suicidally out the window and was sucked away.

One terrifying nightmare that seemed without end. Suddenly a bike wheel was lodged in the window, a leg and grey shoe with pink sock attached with it. The wheel became mashed and the spokes jutted out like cruel skewer sticks, marring the young leg and quickly patterning the cabin with red. He could not look away. He could not look away. He could not.

The world began to slow. Then with a final rock and groan, it stopped. The brown and black, dusty tire was inches from his face and what he knew was a leg laid sprawled upon the ceiling along with it. He felt folded up, like a piece of origami, but he could not look away. Then the black came and softly took him

Community Entrance Blocked with 3 Dead In Car Crash

By ANNETE WHICKERSON, Ridgeview Tribune

Late Saturday afternoon residents of the Park Ridge community were stranded by a blockade of local police and emergency crews. The sole entrance that lead to the mountain community was blocked off as police and paramedics attempted to clean up the remains of a brutal car crash.

For those able to catch a far off glimpse of the scene, it was one of utter pandemonium: A car that had driven square into the trunk of a tree and much farther down the hill a Mercedes had rolled, catching two bicyclists. The jaws of life were elemental in the rescue of one man and the paramedics had quite a lot to clean up.

Police said the crash resulted in the death of a woman and two teenaged siblings but left a man and the woman's six year old grandson in critical condition. It is speculated that the driver of the Mercedes clipped the oncoming car before swerving and rolling down the hill, hitting two bicyclists head on.

The close-knit community says they are devastated and heartbroken and their lost members will be always remembered and missed.

The family's of the deceased cry out to the government for safer roads and tighter road safety laws.

"It's a real shame," says, John Markley, head of the Park Ridge Community Safety Council, "We have been trying to get a slower speed limit and bike lanes on that road for years. All of this likely could have been avoided if we had just had them."

Currently funerals are scheduled to be held on the 23rd and 25th of next week.

Kitty in the Window

Caroline Black



Scars and Trains

Hannah Cash

The mountain side was beautiful. The was sun already bordering on sultry regardless of the early hour, painting the scenery in a gleaming wash of glinting gold. But none of this matters as my silver bike and I whiz by, creating our own breeze in the still morning. Bouncing slightly on the rocky terrain and using my legs as shocks, I see the small dirt mound rushing to greet me and prepare for the seductive moment of flight.

Nothing. Nothing.

Crap, crap, crap!!! This is so bad! This is SO bad! was the first thought I consciously become aware of. Suddenly a comprehension of sliding over the ground, something strange, maybe even wrong with it, then the realization that I am oddly horizontal and not vertical. Pain, or rather the absence of it where I knew it should have been which was scarier. Somehow I had come to a stop and am dragging myself, in shock, along with my bike which somehow manages to turn up in my hands. We make it to the side of the trail.

This is so bad, this is SO bad!! I think. I tremble and sweat, even more than I already was on the warm summer morning in mid-December. My hands, my chest, my legs, my arms, my back and the muscles of my ribs shake spastically. I stare at the small pristine patch of field that faces me across the dirt and rock path. The healthy, light green grasses, bedecked with the occasional fleck of a white flower, sway in the unperceivable breeze.

I was grateful, so ever grateful, that Sam was behind me. How long would I have had to wait for them to find me otherwise? In my terror-flooded mind it would have been hours until that discovery. Trembling, even my voice and stomach; I forced myself to look down at my bent leg. A horrific sight of ragged,

ripe red flesh ballooning out of my knee flashed before my wide eyes. I didn't even notice the large patch of raw red something mixing with the brown dirt running the length of my shin and the curve of my leg. I quickly shut my eyes but the damage had been done. I couldn't shake the utter horror of the electric-red flesh flowing from my knee set against a dull, dirty brown frame of dirt on my skin. Looking was a bad mistake. The image was burned into my mind and I had to concentrate on calming down, trying to soothe the hysteria that was surging from the prison of my self-control. Another biker passed along the trail and stopped to see if I needed any help. Compulsively I refused, putting on a smile and mask of composure and saying that my friend was just along the trail behind him. At least Sam is coming; at least he will find me.

Eventually Sam was there, pulling on the brakes of his bike to pullover on the side of the trail with me.

"Ooooooh," he said, in that 'this really isn't very good or convenient and I definitely didn't plan on it today' tone. His father was a doctor, so he was the only one I wanted to touch my wounds. I mean, his father was a doctor! Therefore he must have some sort of experience or knowledge. I pulled my little backpack from my still trembling shoulders, handed it to Sam and let him retrieve a water bottle, a band aid and a little tube of ointment. He poured the water on my knee and leg in a vain attempt to clean them. Being careful to not look at my leg, I concentrated on my ankle and the subsequent trickles of dirt and blood staining the white and light cream cuffs of my sock and shoe. Because I couldn't afford another pair of shoes I would keep this pair for the next year or two, always with the dark shadow soaked into the lip of the shoe as a reminder of that day.

"Oh, yeah, that will need some stitches," Sam said quietly; his dad was a doctor.

There was still no pain, I was dimly aware that my mind was safeguarding me from it for which I was grateful. Though I was still terrified; I hadn't been to the doctor's or hospital for anything more than a check-up since I was a toddler and I definitely

hadn't had any stitches or anything of that kind before. My spotless record was ruined.

This isn't happening, this isn't happening. I was still unable to fully comprehend the situation, denying in sheer panic that which all my sense told me.

Around me, if I had the attention for it, I could smell the wonderful Australian woods and bush surroundings; everything, the hardy grass, the dry and dusty dirt with the rocks wearing through, the sinewy trees with their small, dark waxy leaves, every scent was always mixed with a hint of Eucalyptus. Even though it was still early in the morning, the sun was warming up to show its full intensity in the afternoon, a spectacular sight that demanded respect and was better enjoyed in the safety of indoors, preferably with air conditioning. Off to the side of the trail, the little dashes of sunlight splashed through the still branches above to scorch the dappled grasses that Sam, our bikes, and myself were sprawled over. The sound of kookaburras, cockatoos, noisy mynahs, and budgies in the distant, still trees was drowned out by the cacophony of my thoughts running on the adrenalin kick of my life. My mouth was dry as were my eyes, fortunately.

Sam opened the tube and squeezed a bit of the ointment onto the band aid and put it on my knee. I can't remember if this was at my request or if he did it just to make me psychologically feel a bit better.

It's funny, as a young girl I hated band aids. I thought they created pain and so would much rather go fearlessly with open wounds than be subjected to the pain of a horrific band aid. Now, as a seventeen year old girl the small comfort of the comically insufficient bandage was a lifeline to keep a grip on the situation.

After helping me with my knee Doctor Sam rode off to get the other boys and their dad to help me to the end of the trail and to some real help.

Sitting there, alone on the grass, I tried to calm myself and my nerves. Trying, trying to stop the shaking of my sweating torso and limbs.

After about fifteen minutes, Sam and my younger brother James returned. Being boys of fifteen and sixteen they had no idea what to do in a situation like this so they simply told me that Daniel and his step-dad were coming back with the 'ute' or SUV, then grimly asked if I could move.

I tried getting up but consciousness slipped and I immediately sat back down.

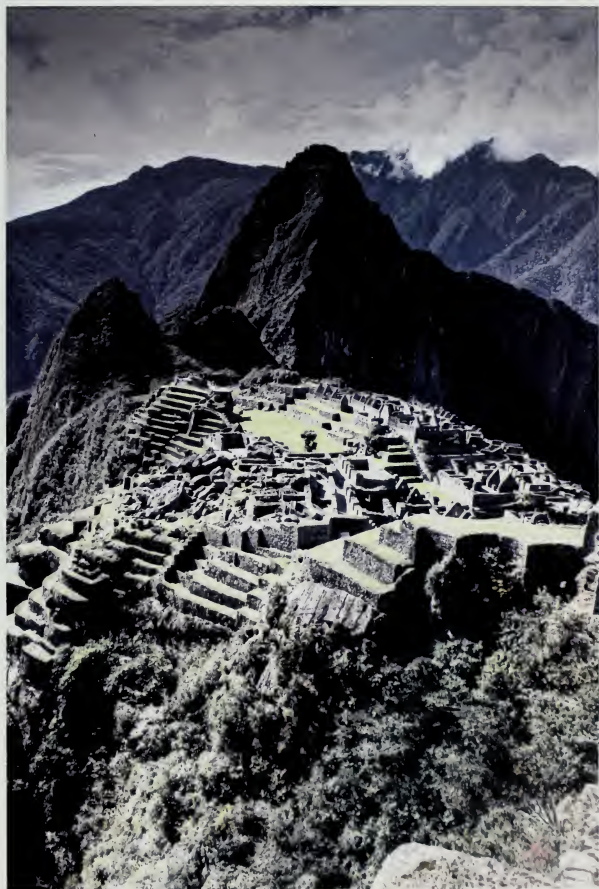
"No, I'm going to pass out." I said as from underwater. I fought the battle inside of me to escape momentarily from the situation. My mind knew that I could use a short break but I knew that these boys had no idea what to do. I didn't want to have them freak out and then suddenly come back to reality in the back of an ambulance. No, ambulances were expensive and a big hassle. Besides, I knew why I wanted to pass out, my extreme panic at suddenly finding myself for the first time in my life in an accident, of this really happening to me, but they didn't know that. And they probably wouldn't believe me.

I had passed out twice before in my life, once because I was very sick and hadn't eaten anything for a while, and the other time when I discovered I had low blood pressure and simply had jumped up too quick after sitting for an hour. I now knew the sensations and ways to fight it.

I lay back on the grass in an attempt to allow the blood easy circulation to my brain then began concentrating on my breathing and calming myself all the while slipping in and out of 'tunnel vision' and the muted hearing that accompanies it. Also, I prayed, prayed to stay conscious so the guys wouldn't freak out, prayed to get through my battle with my mind, which was only trying to help me. I prayed to not throw up, a mild fear that likely wouldn't happen but was still a threat. Repeatedly I sat up only to see the world quietly, peacefully fleeing from my eyes then would flop back to the ground and work on even, long breathing.

Machu Piccu

Dan Baradoy



After about twenty minutes I had a shaky grip of my consciousness and again tried cautiously sitting. Everything was ok so far. The boys, who had somberly sat there watching me in silence, took a keener notice but still said nothing, expecting me to drop again.

“Ok, let’s try moving,” I said and they asked if they should take my bike. I declined, saying that I was going to use it for support.

Somehow I was up now with my bike in hand, still oblivious to the world surrounding me thanks to the one demanding my attention inside my mind. The only thing I took notice of was the path in front of me and each step I took. My right bandaged leg was stiffly poised in the same angle, moving it would have meant death, and I took a small hop with my left leg, supporting my weight on the once beautiful, and now scratched and dented, silver bike.

This process was working and soon I was scooting and hopping along with my bike at a respectable speed. I felt the minor inconvenience of a coming cramp in my left leg and hip but beside that I was on a roll, unsteady, but still going. I considered the absurdity of the image to any passerby and laughed, then I laughed some more just because it felt so good! Laughing was a way, any way to stop the tears that were trying to creep in stealth mode past my eye lids.

My laughing must have appeared a little maniacal to the boys I suppose, since they remained silent and became even more somber at my perverse expressions of joy but I didn’t care. Just like I knew the reason for possibly passing out, I too knew that this was an outlet for the emotions I was trying to suppress. If they didn’t understand that I didn’t feel it my place to enlighten them. I knew and right then that was all I needed to know, they were on their own.

After a while Daniel’s dad, Brother Perry, and his son appeared on the path and he piggy-backed me the rest of the way to the car. I felt a bit bad; I am not a light girl.

He helped me get into the front seat and, unfortunately bending my stiff knee, I smeared dirt and blood on the side of the door, I felt like even more of an inconvenience and began

apologizing and would have tried wiping it up if it was in reach. The man looked at me like I was out of my mind, somewhere I was fighting against going, and said not to worry about it. I sat there for a few minutes, trying to halt the flash flood of tears building up, while the guys pulled out phones and packed away the bikes.

Unbeknownst to me until about a month ago my brother, always a jokester even when not appropriate, called my mom and said that I was dead! He let her think that for a moment before telling her that I had just scratched up my leg pretty badly and to meet us at the doctor's office. Rotten boy. But oh, how I love him and his pranks. I'm sure my mom wanted to hit him.

We drove the thirty or forty minutes to the doctor's office, Sam said that we didn't need a hospital (his dad was a doctor) and I was helped out and into the waiting room. When I saw my mother's face all the supports inside of me collapsed as I bawled uncontrollably. I didn't even notice when the boys left. They had been expecting me at the office and soon I was called into have myself cleaned up.

The next few weeks were interesting. As I became a frequent patron of the doctor's office I discovered that pain tolerance was more of an endurance test as they tried to "gently scrub," what an oxymoron, all the dirt ground into my raw flesh and later on perform skin peels. In the end I had sixteen stitches in my shredded knee and the rest of my leg was treated like a burn victims, due to the layers of skin scraped off.

Two days after the crash my parents were supposed to go to Sydney for their anniversary. At my protestation that they should still go, they really, really wanted to so it didn't take much to persuade them, they took off for the weekend and left poor James to care for me and our youngest brother who happened to have an eye infection at the same time. I think it was payback for James' little prank.

So, three weeks on the couch, unable to bend my knee was a fun experience, especially since for Christmas I got a snorkeling kit that I couldn't use the entire summer. That Christmas we had

plans to go to tons of lakes and hikes during the holiday break. All the plans went out the door. Not two weeks after my crash, my dad and brothers went out mountain biking again. My youngest brother was now really excited to go for some strange masculine reason that I will never be able to understand.

After the trauma of the experience wore off I warmed to the idea that I was going to have an awesome, and for a while, visible scar on my legs. I realized that every scar was a story and that part of the healing process was sharing that story: bragging rights!

The best part of the whole experience came when I began working in an office in the 'city.' I was scheduled to start exactly one week after I had been told I could bend my knee again and try walking without crutches, it was a fun week learning to walk again! My new job was supposed to make a dent in the cost of my college so pushing back the start date was not an option.

I would commute with my dad, taking the bus and train into the city then walking from Brisbane Central Station a few minutes to one of the many piled up office buildings. It was, of course, an office, so skirts were my primary uniform. This meant that the rest of the commuters had a clear view of my heavily bandaged legs. The first few months of my job were difficult and some days my favorite part of the day was watching the other passengers trying to look at me on the train. They would attempt to sneakily, yet obviously, stare at my legs. This was understandable. From their perspective, a young woman, neatly groomed, going to work who just so happened to have white bandages, cottony pads and plastic pads covering her legs was an odd sight. I had the whole front of my right shin covered in white tape with many different colored pads underneath and a huge, puffy plastic covered pad on my knee above it, my other knee was also sporting some white tape as I had somehow managed to simultaneously scrape that knee up as well. This is still a mystery that I will never be able to figure out.

The passengers always stared, sometimes with looks of curiosity, sympathy, apprehension or boredom, at my bandages, but never asked. None of them ever spoke one word to me. They were too afraid to talk. The funny thing is that I wanted

them to ask, I had fallen in love with the story of my gutsiness. Yes, I mountain biked, and yes, I knew it was extreme, I had been in an accident but It was mountain biking, so take that. The inner rebel in me preened as people tried to sneak a quick stare at my legs. How many other women can say that people openly stared at their legs, right? Never mind the context. I was purely entertained at my fellow commuter's discomfort, curiosity, and the odd social reservations which made it a taboo for them to talk to me or ask any questions.

Today the scars are so light that many don't even notice they are there, even people who have been my friends and seen my legs for months. The brightly colored skin has faded and the bumpy textures have grown nearly smooth again, the size of the scars has shrunk and most days I don't even remember they are there. Time, faith, and the support of others really does heal. The many bumps and scrapes in our lives all slowly fade; most until they seem part of the woodwork again. People are made to recover and grow. We are a brilliant, unique and resilient race that has the silly habit of creating our own problems and giving ourselves ridiculous taboos and rules to follow. It is a terrible yet fantastic world we have created for ourselves.

At the end of the day, we all bleed and all in the same color. We all have scars and stories that are dying to be told, it is our nature to share these, to learn from each other and the stories we could tell. We all are curious but hold back from asking the questions that sometimes matter most. Sharing stories is part of the growing and healing process.

We all have scars and a story.

Amber Sunset

Jordan Forte



The Golden Chain

Natalia Ferguson

A golden chain tree grows in my grandparents back yard, surrounded one each side by memories of my childhood. It is between the house, where my grandmother drew us all into the comfort of their home and the fields where my grandfather slung ropes over branches to build us swings. I can still feel the rush of joy I felt as he pushed me in the swing; my feet against blue sky and the red and orange backdrop of leaves. I remember the scent of fresh turned soil and the taste of carrots brushed off with the edge of his shirt. We have stories for every square foot of their acreage, and even more for the river across the street. Every tree has a story as well. My brother Aaron and I built a treehouse in one, dangled from another waiting to land on the neighbors horse, and a series of trees we named after each person in our family. We cut trails with machetes, salvaged fishing tackle from river rocks, and stained our fingers and lips purple with blackberries we found as we explored.

There, in the center of the land, in the center of my memory, is that gold and green tree. It was much smaller, much younger than the rest of the trees on the property. The leaves were lighter and brighter, held in long, weeping branches strewn with yellow blossoms.

Grandpa

My mother stayed at my grandfather's side the night before he passed away. She did what she could to ease his suffering. In a matter of months he had gone from arm wrestling my uncle and hauling his grandchildren over his shoulders to bed ridden, unable to pull the blankets up around himself. Ten years old, I waited for him to recover so we could skip stones together at the river. In my

eyes he was a superhero, and I didn't understand that cancer had invaded his blood, his bones, and his organs.

My mother rubbed his feet, spoke gently to him, and tried her best to soothe him. My grandmother hovered at their sides, visibly aging with each passing day she watched her husband fade and ache. That night the room was calm and moonlight settled in around them. My mother and grandmother stood watch while my grandfather drifted off for a time, only to be woken with a start.

"She was here! My mother was here. She came to get me. I... I haven't seen her in so long." It was the middle of the night, and my mother urged him to rest. He closed his eyes and slept, peaceful.

Aaron

I don't remember how I got to the hospital. I only remember walking into the hospital room, where the nurses kept wide eyes on me and my reaction to my brother. He was strong, healthy, until a seizure took him to the ground. It was entirely unexpected. A machine was breathing for him. I winced to see the tubing jut down his throat, taped to his jaw. I called his name. It had been almost two years since I had moved to Hawaii and I was sure he would leap out of his coma in joy of our reunion. He didn't move. I leaned in close, and whispered in his ear. The nurse understood my disappointment and said, "Don't worry. He can hear you. It's good that you talk to him."

I felt like I was in a room with only a stranger, and settled into a chair.

Five days later nothing had changed. We wandered in and around the room. We held his hands, rubbed his shoulders, and whispered in his ears. We played Bob Marley and placed the headphones so he could hear. We listened to the sound of his heartbeat, and watched it on the monitor. It was steady and reassuring. Time stopped. We didn't eat, or sleep, afraid we might miss a movement, afraid we might miss a last breath or a last beat. Occasionally a nurse or doctor ordered us to rest or eat, telling us we needed our strength. We wandered away for a few moments; long enough to choose some crackers or snacks. Long enough for

us to fall to our knees and pray in private, kneeling near toilets behind closed doors, to beg God for more time with him.

Grandpa

When morning broke, my mother went home to rest, leaving my grandparents together for the last time. The phone rang. It was my grandmother.

“Honey, I think you’d better come back over. His mom came to get him again. I don’t think she’s leaving this time.”

My mother rushed over to her parents’ home and joined my grandmother at my grandfather’s side. In the peace of the morning, as sunlight scattered into the room and a mother awaited her long missed son, my grandfather drew his last breath.

After the funeral, friends planted a golden chain tree in the backyard, a growing, living reminder of the bonds that span time and eternity. It bloomed bright and hopeful, reminiscent of my grandfather’s presence working in the yard. They placed a plaque on the wall that read, “The golden chain of happy memories; never rusts, never breaks.” The tree grew larger and brighter every year. It dug its roots deep into the soil and blossomed brightly, just as my grandfather had.

Aaron

A nurse entered the hospital room, made a few adjustments and checks, looked at me and said, “Why is it always the beautiful ones?”

“The beautiful ones what?”

“The beautiful ones that, you know, end up like this.”

I didn’t know. End up like what? Was she telling me he was dying? I thought of what she said again, the beautiful ones, and wondered who else she had seen and how they had ended up. I looked at my brother. He had been lying in bed for days. The ventilator chafed his lips, and hung obscenely from his mouth. His eyes were heavy and closed. His color was drained. Beautiful?

“You should see him when he wakes up. He’s gorgeous. His eyes, they look brown but if you really look you can see every color. Even some green like mine. And you should see his smile. He has the best smile. I have a picture of him. Isn’t he gorgeous?”

"I know. I can tell. He really is incredible." She left the room. She didn't know. My brother was extraordinarily beautiful. He was tall, muscular, perfectly sculpted. The perfect stature for the perfect hugs. His skin was always darker than mine, even when I spent all summer outdoors running wild in the mountains. We would put our arms next to each other, and he would laugh. His skin was bronze, with a hint of olive and always let off a little glow. His hair was dark brown, and thick. I remember feeling its coarseness whenever I wrapped my arms around his neck.

A tall man met us in the hospital room. He asked me if he could speak with me, and took me into a private room and closed the door. I froze when he told me why he was there.

"I'm not sure if you know this, but your brother is an organ donor."

"That doesn't surprise me at all. Aaron would do anything to help someone. Even people he didn't know."

"Well, I don't want to alarm you, but we usually like to make these decisions before it gets too late. If we wait too long, his organs will not be useable, but if we have everything prepared, just in case he doesn't recover, then your brother will be able to save several lives."

The words rolled off of me. It didn't matter, anyways. I would tell him what he needed to know, but he was going to be a little disappointed when my brother woke up and tackled me in a bear hug.

"I need to ask you a few questions about your brother, and the way he treated his body.

These are extremely important because if an organ is donated it can actually do more harm than good if there are any diseases or problems. Testing for these takes too long for the organs survival, so we have to go by history and hope that our judgment is correct. It is a risk, but it is one that must be made. Do you understand the importance of the questions I am about to ask you?" I told him yes, and answered the questions.

Simple Beauty

Nicole Hamilton Clark



Grandma

Years later, my grandmothers' heart stopped beating while she was sitting with her daughters in Relief Society. My aunt pounced into action. Before the speaker had a chance to pause, she was on the ground doing compressions on her chest. She kept her heart pumping until paramedics arrived and took her to the hospital. My grandmother stayed in a coma for a few days while my mother and my aunt listened to the steady, soft rhythm of the heart monitor.

Aaron

At one point, they asked us to leave the room. The doctor said that they were doing a series of neurological tests and would have the results soon. We were asked to stay in the waiting room. The doctor came in a half hour later. He pulled his chair in close, and said he had some news about my brother. He spoke slowly, as though he wished he could be anywhere but in that room at that time. He told us the purpose of the test. They were trying to find out if my brother was brain dead or not. He concluded by saying that according to state law, brain dead was legally considered dead. He pronounced my brother dead before he walked into the waiting room.

Machines kept my brothers body pulsing, but he would not survive without them. There was no hope of recovery. We could decide when the machines would be stopped, and based on that decision, other lives could be saved from my brothers organs. If we acted quickly, others had the greatest chance of survival.

Looking back, we had all had revelations that it was his time to go. A few months before, my brother wrapped his arms around my mother, placed his head against her shoulder, and told her that he knew he was running out of time. A month before, I stopped in my tracks after being hit with an overwhelming feeling that he would not be alive for much longer. I brushed it off. At the time, there was no reason to believe it.

We felt strongly that he had something greater he had to do. We just had to let him do it. The doctor told us we could say our last goodbyes, whenever we liked. They were finished with their work. Everyone seemed paralyzed. All color drained, and we all saw

in black in white, moving on impulse and habit, with no feeling behind it. Life would never be the same.

Grandma

My grandma slowly emerged from the coma. She wasn't strong enough to leave the hospital bed, so everyone gathered around her. My grandmother always had that effect on people, a central sun we all orbited around. The stories began, stories that spanned time and eternity, with loved ones on both sides. She made friends with the nurses.

"Have you ever read the Book of Mormon?" she asked.

"No, I haven't," a nurse answered.

"Oh, you really must read it! It is... wonderful!"

They tended to her needs, as her bright, crystal blue eyes lit up the room. It was all too much for her heart, still burdened from having rheumatic fever as a child. She began to slip slowly, until again, she fell into a coma.

Aaron

While everyone faded, something drew me immediately to my brothers side. I was in the room alone with him, and I sat on the bed next to him. I leaned in towards him, and he opened his eyes. They were filled with light. The kaleidoscope swirled, with light illuminating from behind. I had never seen his eyes like that before, and prayed that I would always remember their brilliance and the rainbow of colors they fixed, between glowing shades of brown. He looked directly into my eyes, and I felt us lock. His eyes turned up in a huge smile, and his lips moved upwards, curled around the tubing. I couldn't believe it. I was transfixed and joy pierced my heart. There was something different. His eyes were completely washed clean of the sadness that had filled them throughout his life. Something had happened... I knew he had been with the Savior. I was so excited for him, but a feeling overwhelmed me. He couldn't come back. I waited a moment, caught in his eyes, and then spoke. "Aaron! I love you so much!..." My words continued, but I cannot remember them now. I know I told him I was excited to see him, how much I had missed him, and how I couldn't wait for him to get

Butterfly

Andrew Cota



better so we could go to Hawaii together. He smiled and glowed at every word. And then, there was a flinch of pain in his eyes, a longing, and a pause. I saw him fade. He was trying to say goodbye, and I understood, but I couldn't do it. I couldn't say goodbye. He continued to fade, and I told him to hang on, I just had to get Tyler. Tyler would be so excited. I had never seen my youngest brother in such pain, and I couldn't wait to tell him everything was okay. Aaron drew me back in. This was it. I had to say goodbye. There was no time. There shouldn't have even been this little time; it didn't make sense after what the doctor had said. Aaron looked in my eyes, and I remembered his last words to me, the last words he spoke before I moved to Hawaii.

"Everything is going to be okay. I promise."

I told him I loved him, again and again, and then I watched him disappear. He closed his eyes, the color drained again, and the sound of the monitor went back to its slow, mechanical rhythm. The room suddenly felt cold, and I felt terribly alone, terribly empty. I wanted to run to the doctors, tell them he was okay, but I knew he wasn't. He was further gone now than before they started the tests. For some reason, I was given the sacred honor of a last goodbye, and the bitter burden of watching my brother die.

Grandma

My mother and aunt listened and watched the heart monitor on the wall. Nothing changed. Her body wasn't strong enough to overcome, but she was too strong willed to release her role as a mother.

A couple of men, visiting another patient, happened across my mother and asked if she would like them to give my grandmother a blessing. She agreed, and they entered the room and placed their hands on the crown of my grandmothers head. They told her that she had fulfilled her purpose in this life and that a mansion in heaven was prepared for her. It would be just like my grandpa to make sure grandma had a cozy home to return to. They told her not to worry about her children, that someday, (like an eternal golden chain) they would all be together again.

A peaceful expression spread across my grandmothers face. Then, a small smile and her heart began to race on the monitor. My mother and my aunt whispered to each other.

"It feels like daddy is here, can you feel it?" My grandmothers heart rate went wild. He was definitely there.

"Mom, I think dad is here to take you home." Her heart continued to pound, and then slowed. She was torn, both a faithful mother and a devoted wife.

"It's okay mom. Everything is going to be okay, we promise. Daddy misses you, and we know you miss him too. You've been apart long enough. It's okay to go with him." Her heart beat faster than ever, then slowed, until it stopped.

Aaron

Several months later, we received a report. It listed all of the ways in which my brother was able to save and bless the lives of others. Behind the last page of the report was a letter from a man, a father. "I wasn't sure if I should write or not, because I didn't want to burden you anymore about the tragedy you have faced. I do hope though, that it brings you some sense of peace to know that your son saved my life. I have spent many years praying, hoping for a miracle that would grant me more time to take care of my young family, and your son has come to my rescue; my entire family's rescue. I have heard that your son had a great desire to make the world a better place, and that he had hoped to counsel and guide those with addictions and problems. I feel a very special connection to your son and your family. I currently work to aid, and counsel those that have been afflicted or chained to drugs and other types of addictions. I carry my love for your family, and your son with me always, and will always work extra hard to do my best to make this world a better place in every way I can....."

My last memory of talking to my brother in person was outside my mother's house. It was the morning before I got on a plane to move to Hawaii. I followed him around the back yard. Watched him clean this, move that. I tried to say goodbye and couldn't. So I followed him. We talked, and he promised to come

see me. I told him my favorite things, the waterfalls I would take him to. The beaches he would love. The break I would teach him to surf at. I knew he would love it there and couldn't wait for him to join me. But something made me linger. After following him all over the place, he walked right up to me and wrapped his arms around me. He looked right into my eyes, and said "It's okay, Natalia. Everything is going to be okay."

"It is?" I didn't understand what made me hesitate. He laughed.

"Yeah, of course. I promise. I will come see you as soon as I can."

He hugged me tight and kissed me on the cheek. I kissed him back as high as I could reach, right on his neck. I believed him. He promised. Lingered in the back of my mind is a golden chain tree, reminding me that everything is going to be okay.

Candlelight

Bart Jolley



The Song

Katie Bowes

My days stretch on unending like a railway never broken,
While the opinions of those who matter most to me are never
spoken,
The unsolicited judgments of my harshest critics sounding,
Their words are cheap and unexplained and now my head is
pounding
Silent revelations sometimes do more good than harm,
And when your heart is on your sleeve, then it's blood that's on
your arm.
The truth will hurt immensely, it will shake you till you shatter,
But why waste away your efforts in the things that never matter?
I can see you're lost and floating in waves of disillusion,
Half the battle is realization, half is fighting the confusion.
Who's to say that one of us is right and one is wrong,
We each write different lyrics but we all enjoy the song.

Revolver

Katie Bowes

The orbiting earth makes another rotation,
the sunset brings night to a pitiful nation.
The world changes so quickly, I'm behind once again,
At this rate, we'll never keep up with the spin.
Revolving doors help keep me detached,
I use black for the thread on the pants I have patched,
Surrounded by sinners in white shirts and blue,
Why assume that the world must revolve around you?
A revolver clicks coldly and somebody dies,
blood fills the ground while dark clouds fill the skies.
Another war ending and nobody won,
How many revolutions before we are done?

How to Lose Your Soul to Complacency

Katie Bowes

My life meant something.
When I was young,
the thoughts flowed so quickly,
words rolled off my tongue,
I was sharp and excited, eager and bright,
I challenged the darkness and mastered the light.
But somewhere, and somehow
my perspective turned 'round,
I yelled in confusion but got lost in the sound,
I let other people shape who I could be,
and I slipped ever so silently into mediocrity.
I've taught myself to be patient with my premonitions,
I've taken the too-vibrant colors out of my compositions,
I've settled for things I never wanted,
My goals fade to black and my dreams become haunted.
My words lose their value, my thoughts become dull,
my heart's a machine and my mind is a skull,
because this is what happens when you don't look inside-
I can run from my self but I've learned I can't hide.

Offering

Danica Contor



The Imperfect Puzzle

Katie Bowes

Mapping out my memories,
I realize that there are too many.
My canvas is too crowded,
and the picture is not clear.
I've felt the passing pleasure
of many places and people whose
purposes have been buried and betrayed.
I've known the lonely emptiness of having
too much on my mind.
And now as I sit here,
stone-cold and silent,
I half-heartedly arrange the puzzle pieces,
and put them in new places,
and I stare until my eyes blur,
trying feverishly to figure out
the faces,
and the places,
and the future of the picture of my life.
Because if I knew where one piece went,
maybe the rest would follow,
and maybe the rest of me
would know what I am doing wrong,
and maybe, eventually, perhaps

the pieces of my puzzle of my picture
will fall,
slowly and finally, into
where they need to be, into where
I need to be. Into
who I am.

Trouble Being Conventional

Katie Bowes

A lifetime of avoiding normalcy
that's the harsh prognosis
with trouble being conventional
the proper diagnosis
Problems with parochial
and closed and narrow minds
hating all the barriers
and feeling so confined
Can not pay the customary
fees that they collect
Doesn't know the meaning
of regulated and correct
Issues with the system
and a mind somewhat obscene
Can not take direction
will not follow a routine
Disagrees with most of them
socially unaccepted
Loves to do the opposite
of everything expected
Difficulty following suit
constantly conflicted
craving individuality

but feeling too restricted
A lifetime of avoiding normalcy
that's the harsh prognosis
with trouble being conventional
the proper diagnosis

Wearing Silver.

Melece Meservy

The ripping of an empty silence
mingled with my heaving air.
A long lost sigh of humiliation's hum
left behind in the remains of garbage
pails and bleachers debris.
Here I stand.
I wish I understood myself,
the way you're wishing I'd go away.
I wont leave. That's all part
of my chinks and chains, my
offended brain which is far from smooth.
The less you understand the more
I hunger for nurture
(I need you.)
I stood there in the darkness,
for quite sometime, waiting...
For glinting lights in strangers comfort.
Interesting to see; where they sit
and what they do, to keep their
lives happy.
I waited for you to get me,
or speak in accusatory tones,
scorning me for choices made,

a battlefield of a tarnished top, separating contact.
You shed me like a rusted skin
and drop your gaze to the sky
Flickering candles and runny water taps drip
as I sit in the mess of what I've made,
and undone
white noise threatening me ears,
pupils de-latched from reality, seeing only
what I want and need.
Trash, crime, and punishment for shattered skulls of
China dolls, and mirrors telling lies
I wish I understood myself
but you walk away and let me go.
Another night of grounding; self inflicted
to try again to receive something other
than blank stares and empty silence
from the father I once had.

LAIE, OAHU

Bailey Loveless

I live in Laie with the palm trees,
Next to the ocean, got that salty breeze.
It's a small town where there's not much to do
So we cruise to the beach by the light of the moon
Pull out ukuleles to play reggae jams
Get to our feet for a sandy dance.
Then I'd take you to Hukilau for a li'l romance.
But you ain't here so that won't do
So I sing on the swing by the light of the moon.
It ain't paradise. It ain't heaven.
It ain't paradise without you.
It ain't paradise. It ain't paradise.
It's only heaven with you by my side.
Don't have much but my old surfboard
And I take it out to bruise
then get bruised some more.
I pull out Bob Marley to jive to the tunes
And sing them to you by the light of the moon.
Now I don't have much but I got good luck
As we hitchhike the island in somebody's truck.
Wanna kiss in the tree house with some young buck
But you ain't here so that won't do
And I sit alone in the tree by the light of the moon.

Now I like the moon cuz it reminds me of you
Miles across this big ocean blue.
And I think Laie could be all that I need
But it can't be unless you're here with me.
I'm sitting on a swing on old Oahu
Wishing you were here in the light of the moon.
It ain't paradise. It ain't paradise.
It's only heaven with you by my side.

Reflection

Madison Lyman



My Giraffe

By Kenton McRae

I guess one could say I'm a vagabond,
I was abandoned at 2 years old.
Yet it did not take long, no not to long
To learn to ride this back of gold.
One may likely raise a brow,
In curiosity to my case,
Just how I turned out who I am
In this most bizarre of place.
Some may say I'm crazy, not fit for man
Others turn and laugh
Me I don't find it too hard to understand,
I was raised by a giraffe.
Ma and Pa, a safari they took
They left me in the sand
That's how I'm found in Africa
This most strange of land.
My giraffe found me,
In my needy weekend state.
He picked me up and let me ride
So I could recuperate.
I latched on tight, atop the neck
Where most my time was spent
As I grew old, and heavy to,

I slowly made a decent.
I found myself at the bottom of the neck
He seemed to run out of slack
But I didn't mind I seemed to find
Great comfort on his back.
The best of hosts, to say the least
Never once he gave me the boot.
I sat upon his golden back
while his long neck picked me fruit.
When it came to ladies
My dear giraffe taught me how to score.
I knew not the ways of the female giraffe,
I was an African Amateur.
When trouble struck, and danger faced
And all simply seemed so darned
My giraffe would place me atop a tree
Where I was safe from harm.
You people from the village
Found me, say, a week ago
You seem to be so fascinated
I guess we put on quite the show.
I find you people strange,
You offend me, your tyrannical!
How dare you call my wonderful giraffe
Nothing but an animal.
You folks were all speechless.
You didn't know what to do.
You put me in an orphanage.
And my giraffe in the zoo.

I'm crafty, though, I escaped one night
In a laundry sack
I broke into the zoo and found my giraffe
And hopped upon his back.
Oh how It felt good to be at home,
Me and my giraffe once again met
We knocked down the big front gate
And rode off into the sunset.

To Kindle the Great

Nathan Richardson

Absence is to love
As wind is to flame;
It quenches the weak
But the strong doth acclaim.
For absence unveils
Vain, unrighteous desire;
Which assured, if existing,
Casts fuel from the fire
But while fraudulent attempts
Towards another oft' perish;
Earnest, true love,
Allows each one to cherish
Just as a gust
Decides fate for a flare,
Absence reveals truth
As to how much we care.
It seems you could say
Wind and absence equate;
Each has potential
To kindle the great.

Ode to Heaven

By Liahnnne Baraquiel

I am the tiniest particle no one could ever imagine
I was floating throughout the cosmos, traveling through space
I was wondering what I would be like in the future...
I could be one of the rings of the planet Saturn,
I could be one of the satellites of the planet Mars,
I could be one of the stars in the universe..

But, I never imagined that I would be given the chance to
have a life

There were many of us, like me, floating in the numberless
cosmos

We were waiting to be formed, to be organized.
Who would have thought that I would be here?
Who would have thought that I would be this great?
I became more than what I hoped for..

After knowing that I will be given a chance to life, I was wondering what I would be...

I was thinking of becoming a very huge pine tree or maybe a
pink rose for a fair lady

At some point, I thought that I would be a simple organism; a
bacteria, an amoeba or a virus

But, to my surprise, I become way complicated than that.
I still haven't figured out what I would be like.
I was given the chance to have the ability to think and to choose.
I thought that my capacity to think will be as simple as a worm..

A bit complicated as the alligator's or even as developed as Chimpanzees...

These options were way out of my league.

I would be happy if I become one of them.

But, it was not the plan for me, nor was the purpose of my existence.

I became someone who is similar to the Creator's image.

That alone was amazing enough for me.

I could not ask for more.

I was really happy; I am so excited to fulfill my task and my goal.

That same day after my very existence was defined, I made a vow to my Creator.

I said, "thy will be done."

I was very excited to come to earth, to have a body and to live.

After a slice of time... I was born on earth.

I was raised by a wonderful family. Everything was great.

But, unfortunately, I could not remember everything that happened to me before; where I came from, and what I was before I was born.

I am now living the life I was always hoping for.

The life I never imagine would be given to me;

The life that I was really grateful for.

I had the chance to learn about different emotions, I got to learn certain abilities like arithmetic, science, statistics...

I got to learn how to interact with other people and notice their needs.

All these are the attributes of my creator! I would have never learned all these if not given a chance to have this life.

There is nothing more I could ask for.

That is what I was always thinking.

Yes, was thinking. Now, it became different.

Since, I totally forgot what happened before, I became ungrateful.

I was thinking that I do not have the life I was expecting.

I do not feel that there is something to be happy about every single passing day.

I feel like I am losing my will and my courage to move on with life.

I feel like there is no reason for me to continue with my tasks.

I just want to enjoy life. Well, what does enjoy mean?

I feel like it was better if I was a worm or an alligator, or a pine tree or a rose.

I feel like it was better if I was a ring in the Saturn, one of the stars in the universe or the moon on the earth.

I feel like it was better if I was on the space, floating, doing nothing, waiting...

Then one day, I was walking... I saw the worms, the pine tree, the rose.

I saw the stars and the moon and the sky.

Then, something came to my mind.

A very fast glimpse of what I was in the past.

I saw my Creator's face in front of me.

He is smiling at me, cheering me on.

I remembered everything-what I was before, where I came from and how I got here.

I was just a simple particle, floating through space, waiting in time.

I was just a simple particle, a very simple one yet very special, indeed.

Reflection of a Small Town

Jaime Christensen



The Plans

Paris Spillane

Everybody makes a plan but me
Everyone has some idea of who I am, and who I'll be.
Each of you fills my mind, my time, my smile
With things that only you will find worthwhile

Secret Combinations

Lee Bungard

I strained my eyes, trying to see what Laura Jensen's locker combination was. Day after day, I tried to watch her while she opened her locker before and after orchestra rehearsals. On some days, someone would be at the locker to her side on the right. I liked it when that happened. Then Laura shielded her lock, turning it to the left (the side from which I was viewing) and I could get a better look. But if someone was at the locker to her side on the left, then my view was obscured not only by the fact that Laura then shielded her lock turning it to the right, but also by the fact that a body was standing in the way.

So why did Laura openly turn the lock in my direction so I could see it at all? I stood about eighty feet down the hallway with a pair of binoculars. I had hoped that it would take a few days to ascertain her combination. But it had been several weeks and all I had was one number.

So I went on to fully develop the next integral parts and pieces of my devious plan-the plan to open Laura's locker in the middle of the night.

I was attending the Briarwood Academy, a music camp for kids. Every summer, I lived up in the mountains of Boone, North Carolina at the Appalachian State University campus, studying music with some of the world's greatest musicians. I know that might sound exaggerated. I don't want to bore you with a list, but I will drop just one title; my string bass private instructor sat first chair in the Cincinnati Symphony.

The contents of Laura's locker had become an obsession.

Every night I lay in bed, figuring out detail by detail how to break out of the Gestapo-guarded dormitory, work my way across campus to the I.G. Greer Music Building, break in, find

my way up the four flights of stairs in the dark to where our lockers were, open her three-digit combo with the one-digit I knew (details on safecracking forthcoming), and then-ah, sweet succor of success.

I lay there in bed thinking through the component parts of what would happen. My black trousers and black long-sleeved tee were in the closet, first two hangers on the left. The dollar and a quarter were waiting on the desk. The disposable pen also sat on the desk. I knew which elevator dinged and which didn't ding. I knew to put my hand on my stomach and bend over slightly. I had placed rocks in the piano bench downstairs in the lobby. I knew how to cover if I was caught and I knew how to time the circling of the Gestapo guarding the outside of the building if I didn't get caught. Earlier in the day, I had unlocked one of the windows in one of the practice rooms at the music building. I would climb in and run up the four flights of stairs to Laura Jensen's locker. I knew the one-digit to her combination, of course. I had a small flashlight which would enable me to work the combination of Laura's lock. After the deed was done, I would return, waiting at a safe distance until the Gestapo circled around the building to a point where it would be safe for me to enter the dormitory. Then the rocks. Then the run up the stairs (I couldn't use the elevator again at this point, due to the dinging). A brisk run up six flights of stairs, a quick dart into my bedroom and then a jump into my bed would assure me of safety.

The one hitch was the fact that I only knew the one digit to Laura's combination. Night after night I ran through the perfect crime in my mind and I had all the details figured but the one thing holding me back was that I didn't know the other two digits to that stinkin' locker combination.

I thought about the single known digit. That led me to doing a bit of rudimentary math to figure out how many times I had to work the combination until I could get it, using only that one digit. Of course this was just a theoretical exercise; I wouldn't actually attempt the thousands of combinations necessary, knowing only one digit. But I had all the other details fig-

ured out. This was the one thing that remained so night after night, that's where I put my mind to work.

Let's start at the point where the safecracker knows none of the digits to a three digit combination: The locks in the I.G. Greer Music Building each had forty numbers on them. That means that a person would have to try 64,000 different combinations if he didn't know any of the digits ($40 \times 40 \times 40$). My first unnecessary computations had to do with how much time that would take. In the dark of my room (we were not allowed to turn our lights back on after the 10:30 curfew), I clicked on my calculator and did the math. If a single three-digit combination attempt took ten seconds to accomplish, then at 64,000 different combinations, the amount of time needed would be 640,000 seconds which converts into 10,666.66 minutes or 177.77 hours or 7.4 days of work. If I spent eight hours a night (breaking out of my dormitory after curfew and arriving at the music building at, say, 11:00 p.m. and then working on the combinations until 7:00 a.m. which is one hour before the Briarwood Academy classes were to start), that ridiculous schedule would allow me to run through all 640,000 combos within roughly 22.22 nights. Of course the thought of actually doing that was out of the realm of possibility (there weren't 22.22 nights of camp left by the time I started planning the crime). But it was interesting to do the figuring.

My time would be exponentially decreased since I already knew the first number (17). That alters the formula to $1 \times 40 \times 40$ which translates into a mere 1600 necessary attempts, taking 16,000 seconds which converts into 266.66 minutes, or 4.44 hours. What was in Laura's locker was certainly worth the input of 4.44 hours of tedious work turning the disk of a student Master lock enough to comprise 1600 different combinations (that would be, incidentally, 4800 individual numbers). But I held out hope that I would eventually learn the other two numbers of Laura's combination therefore no longer necessitating the 4.44 hours of Master lock-disk-turning tedium.

The very next day, I was opening my own lock when it dawned on me how I could open Laura's lock (hopefully that

very night) without having to know the other two digits. Without knowing the other two, I knew then and there as I opened my own lock (for it was my lock that gave me this epiphany) that I could open Laura Jensen's lock within forty attempts which translates to a mere 400 seconds (which breaks down to 6.66 minutes).

That night, I lay awake, waiting for my roommate to go to sleep (he had not previously been made privy to any of my nocturnal mental safecracking meanderings). Upon hearing the relaxed breathing that told me he was finally asleep, I looked at my clock. It was 11:32 (Chris had taken a long time to shut up and finally get to sleep that night). I slid out of bed and began dressing in the covert clothing of a cat burglar.

I scooped up the dollar and a quarter that would keep me from getting caught, and I crept out into the hallway. Once there, I slipped on my shoes and called the elevator.

The elevator that arrived was the one on the left. That is the elevator that makes a dinging noise every time it arrives. I got in, pressed all the buttons with the exception of "Lobby," got out and let it go away. As soon as the door closed and I heard the machinery pull it away, I pressed the "Down" button again this time calling up the elevator on the right which did not ding when it arrived. I don't know if it was a normal malfunction that caused the lack of ding in the miscreant bell or if there was another person in the dormitory, far more mischievous than I who had figured out this additional step and disabled the dingability of the elevator on the right. I was not questioning why the elevator on the right didn't ding; I got in. When it arrived at the lobby, it did not ding. Its non-dinging demeanor would have ensured that I could get out of the elevator without the lobby Gestapo being aware that I was there (there was one member of the Gestapo in the lobby and one outside the building at this time of night).

The lobby layout was critical, else you may wonder how an elevator could arrive without the lobby Gestapo being aware of its opening, even without the dinging sound. The bottom floor was divided roughly into a $3/4$ room area and a $1/4$ room area.

The 1/4 room area housed the two elevators (be they ding-worthy or non-ding-worthy), a few vending machines, a piano and the foyer where the doors to the building entered. The other 3/4 area which had couches, tables, chairs, a ping pong table, a pool table and a television set, was separated by the 1/4 area by a wall. There were doorways at either end of the wall. I would have exited the elevator without being seen had it not been Gary Phillips, a senior tuba player member of the Gestapo who needed, at that very moment, to get some HoHos and a box of Jujubes. With all the power that tends to go to the head of senior tuba players who are given a little bit of responsibility, Gary asked in a very cross manner, "What are you doing out of bed?" By now I had placed my hand on my stomach, bent over slightly and I mumbled, sickly, "Ginger Ale always calms my stomach down when I'm feeling sick." I pulled out the dollar and a quarter, put it in the drink machine, pushed the Ginger Ale button and got back on the elevator. Good Gestapo agent though he was, Gary couldn't argue with an upset stomach.

Lest you think I was lying, allow me to explain. It's true that Ginger Ale does calm my stomach when I'm feeling sick but I was simply stating a fact; I wasn't actually sick. Just because I happened to say it in a sappy voice while slightly stooped over with my hand placed on my stomach doesn't mean I was lying. Can I help it if Gary interpreted it that way?

I went back up to my room, set the can of soda in the mini-fridge on my counter, changed back into the shorts and tee shirt I had been laying in earlier, and hopped back into bed. Curses! I would have to try again the next night.

The same thing happened the next night, but at least it was with a different member of the Gestapo on guard duty. Had it been Gary again, I risked the chance of being sent to the infirmary.

On the third night I experienced success. I called the elevators. Based on the way they're set, the one on the left always came up first, unless it was being used by somebody else on another floor. Due to everyone being on curfew, that never happened on any night when I needed the elevators. So I went through the usual motions, sending it away and calling up the elevator on the

right. Then I made it into the lobby where the lobby Gestapo (whoever it was; I didn't see him) was watching television in the 3/4 part of the room.

I tiptoed over to the door, leaning against the wall that was by the glassed area surrounding the door. I looked out towards the plaza. All I had to do was wait until the outside Gestapo on guard duty passed by. Then I would have enough time while he circumnavigated the perimeter of the building to make a run for the music building. I held my breath, hoping that he would pass before whoever it was that was watching television needed Hohos or Jujubes.

Seconds seemed like minutes. Minutes seemed like hours. I heard some shuffling in the other room, the area with the television. It didn't sound like he was walking. It only sounded like re-arranging or getting re-settled as a couch potato so I stayed put. As the seconds ticked away I realized what a position I was in. There was no dollar and a quarter cover-up if either of them saw me standing near the doorway. I held my breath. I was concerned that I would have to gush the air out all at once, making a noise that would alert the man in the other room. Where was the guard outside?

He finally approached. His purpose in being out there was to check the lights rather than nab curfew violators. If a light was on, he would count how many floors up it was, then call the Resident Assistant who lived on that floor and alert him of the unpardonable infraction.

He was smoking. Cigarette smoking was explicitly against our rules. I didn't care (I don't smoke). Nevertheless, it seemed like the grownups should be living all the rules that we music students pretended to live.

I was shaking by the time he passed. I saw him turn the corner out of my sight. Of course, if I ran too fast he might still be in that position and see me as I ran further and further away from the building and into the trajectory of his sight. I eased the bar of the door into place. I put the disposable pen at the area on the threshold where the door would pull shut. If the door was set to lock, the pen would keep it open that fraction of an inch that wouldn't let the lock mechanism engage.

Representation of Creativity

Laura Miller



I stepped outside and eased the door back into place without its making noise. Then I ran in the direction of the music building.

I hadn't taken into consideration how vulnerable I would feel, running down the walk that led to the grassy mall across which I would have to run in order to get to the I.G. Greer building. Each night as I lay in bed thinking about my plan, I only considered that my black clothing would completely camouflage me in the darkness. But now I realized that the sidewalk lamps kept the place illuminated well enough that people might see that I was there.

I ran and looked back. I was trying to figure out if the outside guard was still in a position where his line of sight might line up with my line of run. I didn't see him so I tore off as fast as I could. But I didn't run across the mall. That area was too exposed. Even though my route would be lengthened, I decided to obtain cover of bushes, trees and another building. Then I felt more at ease. When I circled this unscheduled dormitory past the trees I realized that I could walk and take it easy. I didn't walk. But it was reassuring to know that I could have.

I ran down the sidewalk that led to I.G. Greer. At that point, I slowed down. Running would have attracted more attention. I looked for the practice room where I had previously unlocked a window and climb into the building.

I found the room. There were thirty-six practice rooms on the bottom floor of the music building. Each of them was about eight by ten feet and each had a piano. From the inside during the day, I had previously counted six rooms from the end of the hall. That's the one where I had unlatched the window. I counted six windows on the outside of the building and I was in.

I scrambled over the top of the piano that was against the wall by the window. I ran out the room, down the hallway and up the four flights of stairs. The lone elevator in the building was a freight elevator. I didn't have the patience to use it during the daytime; I certainly wouldn't have had the patience to use it at night during the committing of my crime.

On the top floor I saw the row of lockers. I ran down the long row. I stood at Laura Jensen's locker and did my dirty work.

I clicked on my little flashlight and began working the numbers. On a three digit combination lock, if you get the first two numbers right you don't even have to know the third number; the lock's dial kind of sticks, alerting you that you're near the third digit. This was the epiphany I talked about when I referred to the time when I discovered I could open Laura's lock with just the one number that I already had. If you know the first number and if the third number automatically tells you when you've hit it, then all you have to do is run through a series of numbers in the second position until you find the combination. The time it takes is improved exponentially: $1 \times 40 \times 1$ equals a mere 40 attempts. 40 attempts \times 10 seconds each comes to 400 seconds to run through all forty combinations. 400 seconds breaks down to 6.66 minutes. Those 6 and $\frac{2}{3}$ minutes won't even be necessary when you logically think about the combination that you have to come up with. I already knew that the first number was 17. I also knew that the third number would reveal itself. What were the chances that I would actually have to run through all 40 of the middle numbers? What was the likelihood that the middle number was going to be the last possible number, 40? What do you think the likelihood would be that the last number was going to be 39, 38, or even 37? It could have been any of those numbers but the odds are against it.

It turned out that the middle number was 8. That means it only took me eight attempts, knowing the first number and knowing that the third number would reveal itself. 8 attempts times roughly 10 seconds apiece—well, you do the math this time.

The lock clicked open. I let out a little “Whoop!” I had cracked it! I slid the lock out of place. I pulled up on the handle and opened the door. Shining my flashlight I could see a few items in there but none of them mattered except for her cheap, scratched, unattractive fiberglass violin case. What I sought was in there.

I pulled out the case and walked down the hall a few doorways until I was at an auditorium. This wasn't the concert auditorium but it was a smaller, master-class-and-recital auditorium. This one only had about a hundred and fifty seats in it.

I carefully eased the latches of the cheap case. I shined my flashlight and there it was! In my lap lay the object of my devious planning—a true Stradivarius violin. No one at camp was supposed to know that this child prodigy owned a Stradivarius, I am sure. The worth of a Strad is several hundred thousand dollars. Some sell for millions.

So how did I know? I knew Laura Jensen from camp the year before. Back at home after camp the previous year I had researched all I could about her. I thought she was cute and I was fascinated that a girl my age had performed with symphonies all over the world—the Berlin Philharmonic, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles and others. In my obsession, my discovery that she owned the famed Baron d'Assinies Stradivarius violin was a fluke, a freebie. All year long, I pined away over the fact that I had stood in the presence of greatness and I didn't even know it. I obsessed over coming up with a plan that would allow me to touch, to hold, to play such a masterpiece as the Baron d'Assinies. Now was the day. The pinnacle moment of all my planning, my dreams, my daydreams even. I held a violin that had been created by the master violin maker and this one in particular was nearly three hundred years old.

Then why the cheap fiberglass case? No attention would be brought to a Strad if it was in an ugly case. Whether or not it lived in a prestigious, beautifully lacquered case of rare wood during the rest of the year, I didn't know. But at music camp, it was disguised as a common student violin.

Why was it in a locker, instead of in the dormitory room with Laura Jensen herself? At camp, everyone shared a room with one other person. Whenever Laura went to the bathroom, whenever she took a shower or whenever she was involved in any activity that her roommate wasn't involved in, she would be leaving the priceless masterpiece to the fates and whims of a roommate who might one day become curious about the instrument or might share the instrument with others in order to show off. Her roommate was nice and seemingly responsible. Nevertheless, it was a chance not to be taken. The violin would be safer in a locker, being treated like or at least viewed by others as just another stu-

dent model instrument than it would have been had it been in Laura's own room.

I carefully pulled it out of its case and set the case aside. To begin with, I merely plucked the instrument, pizzicato style. If I had made any miscalculations and if I was to be suddenly interrupted by camp guards or by the campus security, at least I could report that I had "played" a Stradivarius violin (never mind that it was only "played" in terms of pizzicato. I could say I played it, nonetheless).

Then with reverence, I removed the bow and tightened the hair. This wasn't just any bow. It was a Guarneri bow, created by another master craftsman, a contemporary of Stradivarius, Bartolomeo Giuseppe Antonio Guarneri, del Gesù. The bow was just as old as the violin, it was just as beautiful, and it was extremely valuable.

After tightening the loose horse hair and running the hair across a cake of rosin, I placed the violin under my neck and rested my chin directly on the chin rest (whenever Laura played it, she always covered the chin rest with a handkerchief before resting her own beautiful chin on it). I walked to the stage and climbed the three steps. Even though there was only an audience of one (me), I wasn't about to play this without giving it the decency and respect of stepping up onto a stage in order to do so.

I announced to an empty theater that I would regale them with a rousing version of *Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman*. Never mind that that song is known as *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* in our country. You don't think I was going to call it that while playing a Strad, do you? I was a clarinetist. While it is true that I also played the string bass, I didn't know how to play the violin. So *Twinkle, Twinkle* was the highlight of my repertoire.

I fiddled around with a few other excerpts from other songs such as *Auld Lang Syne* and *Froggy Went a-Courtin'*.

The Strad is a Strad because of a number of reasons. Antonio Stradivari (as well as his sons Omobono and Francesco) was a master craftsman. But in addition to what he knew in terms of carving and forming and fitting, he also developed a secret recipe for

shellac which no one has ever been able to find or duplicate. In addition to the usual extractions from the female lac insect (*Coccus lacca*), Stradivarius also used the shells of certain crustaceans (this is where the "shell" and the "lac" come from). He included borax, sodium and potassium silicate. Also in his recipe were Arabic gum, honey and egg white. But as for the exact proportions and other elements, no one knows. The secrets have eluded even scientists armed with electron microscopes.

In addition, the wood that he used for the body and sides of the instruments was treated in a way of which Stradivari couldn't have been aware. He used spruce for the top, willow for the inside parts and maple for the back, for the strip and neck of the violin; that he had control over. But the detail of the trees that were cut down which were dragged by horses to a river, down which they floated until resting in a lake for long enough that the bacteria and microorganisms which lived in the water were able to permeate the pores of the wood, altering its density to the point where violin playing from a Strad sounds sweeter and more passionate than playing on any other instrument (presumably including instruments which were made by Antonio Stradivari which were made from wood that didn't go through this treatment), was out of his control.

And finally, another reason why a Strad is a Strad is because over the last nearly three hundred years of their existence, the instruments have always been in the hands of virtuoso musicians. Their perfect pitch and perfect playing of the instrument has an effect that can only be observed at the molecular level; the very ions of the wood line up in a certain way after the instruments have been treated with such great care.

What about tonight, you ask? This was to be one isolated event. My screeching away at the beautiful instrument for my fifteen minutes of wonderment would not affect the instrument adversely in any way. My falling down the stairs in the dark after my little concert, however, did. I broke the Baron d'Assignies!

I don't mean to say that I cracked it or that I scratched its surface in an unsightly manner. I mean to say that in my fumbling in the dark, in my missing the top step, I inadvertently slammed the

violin down on the terrazzo floor (oh, that the floor could have been carpeted!). Landing on top of it with the full weight of my body, nothing buffered, annihilated three hundred years of perfection. The fragile nature of the thin, ancient wood on both the top and the bottom did nothing to protect itself. It cracked and a large section completely separated from the instrument.

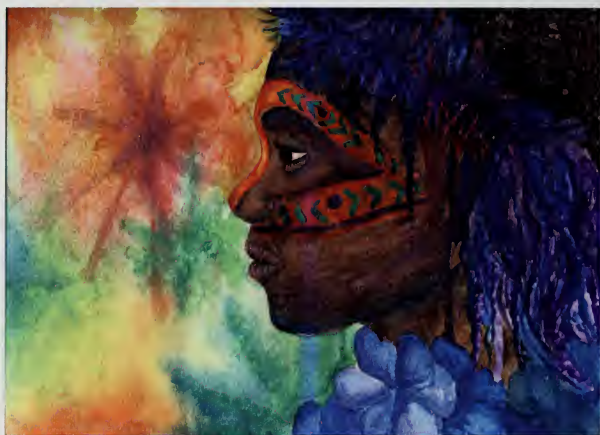
I held the violin in my hand and couldn't believe, absolutely couldn't conceive the difference that a few seconds can make. I had this priceless three hundred year old violin in my hand just a few moments earlier and with one misstep of fate, it was rendered valueless. There was no gluing to be done. There was no working and re-working of the wood. There was to be no salvaging of parts or pieces (the neck was cracked as well). It was ruined. I couldn't believe that my senseless selfishness had given way to such a catastrophe of insurmountable proportions. Nothing could be done for the violin and nothing could be done for poor, unsuspecting Laura.

I hyperventilated as I moved the piece of wood that was broken off back in place. I shook and had hand tremors as I straightened the neck as best I could. This wasn't to be a fix of the instrument. This was just to get it back in the case so I could put it back in the locker and run away.

Suddenly I was aware of my fingerprints. Was there any way I could cover my involvement in this? Even if I got back to my dorm room without alerting any security or anyone who stood guard around or inside the building, would I be able to eliminate the evidence well enough that the finger of justice wouldn't point back to me? I pulled out the hem of my shirt out and I wiped, wiped, wiped. I rubbed hard against the well-polished wood. I no longer needed to work with any reverence or respect, I merely had to destroy the evidence. I worked on the scroll and the neck of the instrument. I hadn't touched the chin rest with my fingers but I didn't know if any DNA could be found there from my neck or chin. I pushed-not placed-I pushed the hideous monster instrument back in the fiberglass case. I wiped my shirt up and down the length of the bow. I

tanna girl

Shaina Leavitt



wiped the “frog” or “heel” of the bow, as well as the stick. I wiped the strings themselves.

I didn't know if my fingerprints would show up on the case due to the texture that had been molded in the manufacture of the fiberglass as a design element. Nevertheless, I wiped the case, too. I wiped the hinges, the latches and I ran down the hall to the lockers as fast as I could. I had to take off my shirt in order to wipe the metal on the entire front of the locker. Had I touched any metal inside? I didn't know. I had to continue wiping in order to cover all bases in case I had inadvertently touched anything else in there.

I ran down the stairs to the bottom floor. I ran down the hallway to the end where I attempted to exit the normal way, through the doors we used every day when the building was open. But the door was locked. It wasn't locked the normal way where someone inside could push on the metal bar and get out but someone on the outside couldn't get in. It was locked by means of a chain that ran through the bars on both sides, locked with a padlock. There was no time to figure the math for this one. I had to run to a practice room, any practice room this time, and jump out a window. I didn't bother to take the time to wipe anything in the practice room-the piano I had to climb on, the panes of glass, the window ledge or frame. I knew that if my fingerprints in that room were in question I could just testify that I had been using the practice room for other purposes; I could state that my fingerprints were there from normal usage of the room.

I ran across the lawn and circled the building that I had, only minutes earlier, added to my route. I hid in the camouflage of bushes and trees for a while until I was sure that the outside guard had passed far enough to allow me to run up to the building. I hoped that the darkness would preclude the guard inside the building (who was hopefully watching television) from seeing my silhouette run toward the building. I was trying to maintain some semblance of composure but I actually thought that if I was caught, it would serve me right; my guilt was that profound.

I ran up to the front door. I saw no one in the 1/4 room, the room with the elevator. I quietly pulled the door open. No one had spotted or messed with the pen in all the time I had been gone (I suppose I had been gone for less than thirty or thirty five minutes total, but with my new, distorted view on the supposed brilliance of committing the perfect crime, I felt so sick to my stomach that I had no clue as to how much time had actually elapsed). I was back in the building, and hearing the guard in the other room laugh at something on TV assured me that he hadn't heard me enter. The next part of the plan was going to be tricky.

I silently tiptoed over to where the piano was. I quietly opened the bench. I carefully pulled out all the rocks I had stored in there, making sure not to click them together. I walked back to the doorway. I stacked all the rocks in one sweaty hand while picking up a music stand with the other. All at once, I threw the rocks and music stand across the room to the other side. I was counting on the guard running into the 1/4 room through the doorway on the other side of the wall (not through the doorway that was nearest to me) in order to find out what the racket was. I heard him get up and run, yelling obscenities. From the sound of his footsteps, I ascertained that he was running to the side of the room where I wanted him to run. I peeked into the 3/4 room. I saw the last of his body run through the opening on the other side of the separating wall. He was in the 1/4 room and I made a dash across the 3/4 room for on the far wall past the couches, past the ping pong table, past the pool table and the TV-was the staircase that led upstairs. I ran quietly, but when I got to the door, I ripped it open and it slammed. I knew that would alert the guard that he had been had, but in the few seconds that it would take him to run across the room to the entrance of the stairwell, I knew I could get up a flight or two. I simply didn't have the time to open or close it quietly, this was in all in the plan.

I had six flights of stairs to run up. All I needed to do was to stay a flight or so above where the guard would be. I had a better lead on him than that. I was up at the level of the third floor before I heard the door at the bottom of the stairwell crash open.

I heard him holler and I thought it was Gary. I couldn't be sure. I ran like a wild man. My legs were weak from the speed and from all the stretching to take the steps two and three at a time. I couldn't revel in the fact that I had a good lead-only when I was lying in the safety of my own bed would I be able to feel confident that I had committed the perfect crime (which was now so much more of a crime than I had intended). But for a split-second I realized that if it were Gary, the HoHo and Jujube eating tuba player, I would easily be able to continue to lengthen that lead without any problems.

In seconds, I was at the Fourth Floor. Then the Fifth. And finally, my floor, the Sixth. I rushed in, ran down the hall and quietly (but rapidly) threw my door open. I gently pushed it closed behind me. I got into bed and only there did I start to untie and remove my shoes and socks.

I had done it! I had committed the perfect crime!

I heard movement on the other side of the room. It was Chris. Was he . . . awake?

"Where were you?"

I froze. He wasn't supposed to know I was gone. He was asleep when I left. How was it that he was awake now? I was quiet when I opened the door. I was quiet when I closed it. What awakened him? I didn't know what to do. The thought of Chris not being asleep never entered my plans or calculations. I always thought the plan through with the knowledge that I wouldn't leave until Chris was asleep. I never considered that he might wake back up.

"How long have you been awake?"

"Since you closed the door."

I was silent, but he asked me again, "Where did you go?"

"To the bathroom."

Chris looked at his clock. "For half an hour?"

When he said he woke up when I closed the door, it didn't occur to me that he meant when I closed the door upon leaving the room in the first place.

I didn't know what else to say. I answered, "I really had to go." Although I reminded him that the cafeteria had fed us Salisbury steak and artificial mashed potatoes for dinner, he didn't believe that it took me a half hour to "sort it all out" so to speak.

"Chris, I have to swear you to secrecy. I'll tell you, but you have to promise never to tell anyone . . . ever . . . in the history of the world."

"Whatever."

I whispered the details, one after another. I started with the disposable pen on the desk, the dollar and the quarter, the rocks in the piano bench. I told him about my black clothing. I told him how to call up the elevator that doesn't ding. I told him about how I had to cover up in the lobby when one of the guards saw me-the Ginger Ale trick. I told him, detail by detail.

506

Bailey Loveless

Joseph could never remember anything about dying. He had sat up that morning, looked at the alarm clock and there was a darkness like he had just laid down and gone back to the sleep he had been so much enjoying. When his eyes fluttered open, he was surprised to find his head titled back against the hard, faux leather seat and the shuffling hum that filled his ears along with the agitation of a woman's voice that he could not quite make out. Light flashed in front of his eyes, causing them to sting momentarily before snapping them back down against it. There was a strange metallic odor in the air, foreign and unsettling as he recalled the wintergreen candle in his bedroom, whose warm, familiar scent was the last tangible sense he could recall.

His neck felt stiff as he sat up and there was an uncomfortable throbbing in his temple that he unconsciously tried to push away by pressing his palm to it. Leaning forward, cradling his head in his hands, he dared to open his eyes again, slowly this time. The sudden brightness was not quite so shocking and he blinked again, his pupils adjusting to the blue tinted fluorescents hanging over head.

"Hush. He's awake," he heard softly in a gentle but aged voice.

"Big deal," came the sharp irritation of the woman again, who had been chatting in the background noise. "Now as I was saying—"

He was only just aware that he was probably the object of their conversation as the looming migraine overpowered his forehead. He applied more pressure as he continued to rub his throbbing temples.

Suddenly he jerked up; the pain forgotten. He was late for work. The boss was going to murder him. He needed to close that deal today. But where was he?

Windchimes

Caroline Black



He swiveled his head back and forth, taking in the unfamiliar surroundings. He had never been here before wherever that was. The room was rectangular and long completely illuminated by the blue fluorescents like the one above him. Chair upon chair with the fake, uncomfortable leather back were lined in neat horizontal rows all facing ahead to a desk, where a receptionist was busy filing paperwork. The walls were a bothersome color, somehow in between brown and white. Not white. Not cream. Not ivory. Not brown. Not tan. But somehow bronze and alabaster in color. The linoleum floor checkered out, alternating between green and gray squares. There were no windows which made him feel claustrophobic and when he swiveled around in his chair, the only door he saw was a revolving door whose glass panes were tinted so he couldn't see outside.

He supposed somehow he could've ended up at his client's building but the room didn't look like an office or reception area. If anything it resembled a hospital or the DMV.

Panicky, he expectedly looked around the room again, searching for an address or business name. But there was none to be seen. He swung his head out, in between the space between his chair and the next, scanning up and down the aisle but nothing offered any indication to his location. And it was at this time that Joseph first accounted for the other people inside the room. There was a woman in a business suit, standing away in a corner, with light blonde hair pulled tightly back into a bun and talking on her cell phone rapidly. It was from her that the agitated shrill was emitting. A few rows behind him, a disheveled woman he could not quite make out sitting casually in tattered clothing. In front of him, a teenage boy quietly twiddling his thumbs wearing a simple white t-shirt and jeans with long, black hair that had a slight purple tint as though it had been dyed. A man of who looked of Hispanic origin sat in the row in front of him, a few seats down, with his arms folded across his chest. And an old lady sitting across the aisle from him who caught his attention.

She beamed at him through heavily crimsoned lips, the wrinkles around her mouth deepening. He was unsure how he had missed her exactly as her scrub-like pants and button up shirt were

both different but bright shades of pink. The texture of the pants reminded him of the paper towels in his kitchen, which he had used the very night before to clean up after his dinner. Her withered hands delicately clutched the top of her purse nestled in her lap, her nails gleaming back at him, a red even brighter than her lips. She lifted one finger however to push the bridge of her gold-rimmed glasses, framing brown eyes, upwards.

"Excuse me," Joseph started as their eyes locked. "But where are we?"

"What do you mean, dearie?" she replied cheerfully.

"I was wondering," continued Joseph, raising his voice slightly in case a hearing impairment was present, "If you could tell me where I am. You see, I was supposed to be at work quite some time ago."

"Oh Joey," said the old woman with a giggle, surprising him, "Don't be silly. You know where you are."

He scanned the aged person up and down again quickly for a hint of familiarity. But none was recalled to his mind and his head tilted slightly in confusion. Perhaps it was a memory he had lost but he doubted if he could not remember, someone this old could.

"Excuse me," he said politely, "Maybe I've forgotten but have we met before?"

"We've been expecting you," she replied cheerfully. "And we're so glad you're finally here."

"Speak for yourself," interjected the blonde lady resuming her phone conversation. "Now--"

"Expecting me?" asked Joseph,.

"Yes," continued the old lady. "For quite some time now. We were wondering what was taking so long."

"So this is Dunder and Sons? Oh I'm so sorry to have kept you waiting," Joseph asked, suddenly at ease that he had made his appointment even if it had been late.

"Dunder and Sons?"

"Yes, our appointment?"

"Well yes, your appointment. Have you gotten your number yet?"

"My number?"

"Yes," continued the old lady. "To see him."

"Mr. Dunder?"

"Oh Joey don't be silly. To go see him."

"Who?"

"Come one dearie, don't play the fool."

"What do you mean?" panicked Joseph. "Where am I? Who are you? Where are we going? What are you talking about?"

"-Young man!" cut in the woman on the cell phone. "You need to calm down. I'm on a very important business call and it's hard enough talking down here as it is."

"There's no need to make a fuss, dearie."

"I just want to know-"

"-Zip it!" said the blonde woman. "I'm on the phone!"

"Don't worry about Linda, dear," whispered the old lady, leaning forward slightly and pawing one red-painted hand towards him, "She's a lawyer."

"Oh," whispered Joseph, nodding his head up and down as if Linda being a lawyer was the explanation to all his inquiries.

Linda looked at him in disdain with a huff from where she stood. Then there was a sharp noise of metal scrapping across a hard surface and the groan of rust. Joseph turned to see an Asian man entering through the revolving doors. His eyes were wide and he fumbled with a newspaper in his hands. Tentatively, he walked towards Joseph.

"Uh 'scuse me," he said in broken English with a thick accent and tapping the map, "You know where?"

"No," said Joseph, shaking his head.

The man furrowed his eyebrows together in concentration, pointing at the map more vigorously. "You know where I go?"

Joseph gently put a hand on top of the map. "I'm just as lost as you are."

"Oh. Oh!" said the man, smiling for a moment before shaking his head. "New York. So confusing."

"Just go get your number dearie," chipped in the old woman, pointing a thin finger towards the receptionists.

"Oh. Oh!" said the man, smiling before walking towards the desk.

"What is this place? Is this even an office" said Joseph cheerfully turning back to the old lady.

"No. Not exactly," replied the old woman.

"You're where you deserve to be," said someone else, a woman.

"You should probably stop beating around the bush, don'tcha think?" piped up the teenage boy with the black hair, turning around to face them in his seat.

"Ugh. The service down here is impossible," chided Linda in the background, pulling the phone away from her ear.

"Down here?" question Joseph. "What does she mean by that?"

"I'm not beating around the bush," stammered the old lady, rearranging her golden glasses on her bridge.

"Yeah, you are Doris."

"You shouldn't talk to your elders' like that young man."

"I still have no idea what's going on," interjected Joseph. The boy and the woman exchanged glances in silent conversation, Joseph looking between the two of them. The boy shrugged, succeeding to the woman and turning back in his seat, like a reprovved student.

"What was the last thing you remember?" she continued to Joseph.

"I don't know," he said. "I woke up and I was late for work and then there was blackness like I fell back asleep."

"Well you see dear," said Doris, hesitantly, her voice suddenly becoming quite tentative.

"You're dead Joseph," came a cynical voice.

"I wasn't going to say it like that!" protested Doris.

Joseph looked towards the voice, coming from the worn woman sitting in the back. It was the first time Joseph had gotten

a good glimpse of her. She was dressed in patched clothing, fingerless red gloves, and worn black over coat. A squashed, falling apart top hat sat on her head, covering bright, curly red hair. She had dirty smudges across her face which was pretty yet cold. He could not quite place it. There was something masculine and challenging in the face though definitely female. Perhaps it was the strong jawline and chin but her lips were pulled into some kind of expression that he could not quite define. A smirk maybe?

But it was not her strange appearance that preoccupied Joseph's mind at this time. What had she said? He was dead? No impossible. He was in perfect health.

"W-what?" he stammered.

"Dead!" exclaimed Linda, pulling the phone away from her ear, "D-E-A-D! You're dead!"

"This is impossible,"

"Oh hun, it's not that bad," said Doris. "I've been here a while and it's really quite fine."

"We're dead?" suddenly perked up the Asian man, causing the others to fall into silence.

"You should probably go get your number," muttered the teenage boy to Joseph.

"My number?"

"From the receptionist."

"Yes," said the woman with the red hair. "Go get your number Joseph."

Furrowing his eyebrows, Joseph slowly stood up, sliding out into the aisle to the white desk at the front of the army of chairs. It was the first time he noticed the only other door in the room. A large, dark wooden door a few feet behind the receptionist's chair. It was also the first look he had gotten a look at her. Her graying hair was frizzy, sticking out from her skull in strange, random tufts. Thick, bright green horned eye glasses sat neatly at the end of her sharply upturned nose, which, consequently, reminded him of a rodent. The glasses magnified her eyes which were squinted and shifty, constricted into a permanent glare. A

Streams and Snowy Mountains

Jaime Christensen



mole had grown out of control above the right corner of her thin lips and long, thin fingers typed relentlessly over an outdated typewriter.

"They haven't even upgraded to a PC yet?" he attempted lamely at humor. The clicking of the typing abruptly ceased. She looked up slowly, her narrowed eyes gazing at him condescendingly. It felt as though she was somehow looking down at him though he toward over her in her desk.

"Can I help you?" she said slowly, her voice gravelly and sluggish.

"Yes," Joseph said clearing his throat. "You see, I'm not quite sure what's going on and I died which sounds-"

"Just take your number."

"Excuse me?"

She glared back up at him again before resuming her typing. "Just take a number and sit down."

He stood there uncertainly. "I'm sorry but my number?"

Without looking up, one of her spindly hands reached out and slammed on top of a small dispensing machine he hadn't noticed before, a small piece of paper already held out for him. Joseph took the paper, a small rectangular ticket reading:

SECTION SIX WAITING AREA

VISITOR

506

Welcome. Your needs will be met shortly.

"Five hundred and six?" he whispered to himself before turning around, retreating from the diligent chatter of the typewriter and resuming his seat in the uncomfortable faux leather chair. He raised two of his fingers to his throat, feeling for a pulse. When he couldn't find one, he moved to his wrist and then his chest. No heart beat.

Leaning forward, he rested his temples on his head, shaking his head slowly back and forth. His stomach churned like he was going to throw up though he wondered how that was possible if he were dead like they said.

"Are you alright dear?" asked Doris, having procured a ball of yarn and knitting needle from somewhere.

"What's this for?" replied Joseph, holding out his ticket.

"That's you're waiting number for when you get served."

"How soon am I?"

"Well dear, not for a while. Just looking at the call number."

Raising his head, he saw the digital sign over the receptionist's head that he hadn't noticed before. Red electronic lights flashed against a black background.

NOW SERVING 009

"Are you kidding me?" exclaimed Joseph, sitting up sharply. "A little while? I'm number five hundred and six! That will take forever!"

"Well it's not like you have anywhere to be," smiled the homeless looking woman.

"Stop complaining," snapped Linda. "You just got here."

"What is this for anyway?" asked Joseph. "What happens when it gets to my number?"

"That's when you have your appointment of course," said Linda.

"Does it feel...hotter to anyone else in here?" said the Asian, struggling with his words.

"Appointment with who?"

"Oh for crying out loud, you really aren't the sharpest tool in the shed," she said as she impatiently tapped at her cell phone keypad. "Your appointment with him of course! The one who runs this place."

"Who-" began Joseph but Linda silenced him with a raised finger as she lifted the phone back to her ear. He tapped the shoulder of the boy in front of him who looked at him over his shoulder. "Who am I seeing?"

"Dude, she just told you," said the boy.

"Eddie! Shush! Phone!" half-whispered Linda. Eddie, the teenager with the black hair, rolled his eyes and faced away from Joseph.

Disheartened, Joseph's eyes rested on the one person in the room who hadn't spoken yet and he slid down a few chairs till he was behind the Hispanic man. He poked the man's shoulder till he swiveled in his seat, the two facing each other. The man grinned, a wide and yellow-stained smile, the dark hairs above his lips rising. "Hola."

"Excuse me," said Joseph, an edge of desperation creeping into his voice. "Can you help me? Who am I supposed to see?"

The man shook his head. "No comprende."

Joseph's hopes immediately sunk and suddenly he felt an urge to shout and then cry out of frustration. But sitting up, he first pointed to himself. "Joseph."

The Hispanic smiled again. "Joseph," he repeated before pointing at himself. "Mi nombre es Alberto."

"Alberto," Joseph mimicked. Then he held out the ticket to the man and then shrugged, hoping to convey his situation.

The man nodded, his eye's gleaming in recognition and actually seeming to understand. He pointed to the door behind the receptionist's desk. "Detras de la puerta es El Diablo."

"What?"

"El Diablo."

"The devil."

Alberto nodded before smiling once again and shrugging, turning back away from Joseph. Hesitantly, Joseph slid down back to his chair.

"Doris," he began quietly. "Are we going to see the Devil?"

"Oh dear, don't take it personally. I think you're a fine young man and I accepted it years ago, what with all those nights with Charlie," exclaimed Doris, bursting into girlish giggles.

"Accepted what?"

"Oh Saint Joan, you still don't get it," said Linda dejectedly.

"Huh?"

"That you're in Hell!" exploded Linda, sobs erupting from her throat. "We're all in here and when you go through that door, you'll go face to face with Lucifer!"

"We're in Hell?" outburst the Asian man.

"Linda," hesitated Joseph. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you."

"You men never do!" she yelled, compulsively throwing her phone, Joseph ducking to avoid it hitting his head.

Walking unsteadily in her stilettos, the lawyer stumbled to the nearest chair and collapsed into it, burying her face in her hands, shoulders shaking violently through her sobs.

"Now look what you've done," sighed the haggard red-haired lady, reluctantly standing and putting one arm around Linda. "Now, now Linda, there's no need to cry. You knew this was going to happen. Let's not make a fuss about it shall we? Isn't there a saying? 'All lawyers closest to the fire.' Ulysses S. Grant said that you know. But it makes sense doesn't it? All those late nights at the office away from your children. Spending more time on the phone than with your husband. And let's not forget all those innocent people you sent to jail. You think this is unfair, don't you? That you're being unrighteously judged? Well what about all those people you unrighteously judged? Now it's your turn so let's not make a fuss about it."

"Hey," started Joseph, "She was just doing her job. You don't need to be so hard on her."

"No," choked out Linda, "She's right. She's absolutely right. I deserve this."

"What? No, Linda, that's not true. You still have a choice."

"It is true. Leave me alone."

"But--"

"You heard her Joseph," smiled the woman. "Linda's accepted it. Leave her alone."

"But what about Doris?" exclaimed Joseph. "Doris seems like a nice lady."

"Doris can explain for herself," sneered the woman moving back to her seat.

"Well Doris," said Joseph as he folded his arms.

"Well," the old lady began, "You see my husband was away quite a bit and you know...One gets lonely. And Charlie lived just down the street. But Bill came back and found out. And I just had no choice you see. He was in a rage and I had the carving knife-

"You cheated on your husband and then killed him?!"

"Well I wasn't going to say it like that!" Doris protested.

"Well what about him?" said Joseph, pointing the Asian man.

"Red Guard. Tyranny. The 'evil' called communism," yawned the red-haired woman.

"I doubt that was exactly his fault. Wouldn't that have been his superiors?"

"Well according to your logic, he still had a choice."

"Fine. And him?" he argued, pointing to Eddie. Eddie shrugged.

"Took a joint behind the gym and cheated his whole senior year," answered the woman.

"And him," asked Joseph, finally pointing to Alberto.

"Hopped the border, of course. And stole money to make it."

"Well what about me?"

"What about you?" she answered, adjusting her dirty gloves. "You know what you did."

"No I don't. I'm not like them. I didn't steal, I didn't cheat, and I didn't hurt anybody."

"Then why are you Joseph?"

"Exactly. I don't deserve this. In fact, none of us do."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. I think it is."

"Joseph, there comes a time where each of us must face the consequences and the sooner you understand that, the better. The rest of us understand. I've accepted my fate. Hell is where we belong."

"Are you insane? Hell is a bad place! Waiting down here to see something is a bad thing! When we see that person, it'll be a bad thing! And there are good people in here who don't deserve this."

"Think what you will. We aren't the ones complaining."

"You're all crazy," Joseph mumbled, standing. "I've got to get out of here."

The woman chuckled, he determinedly walked back up to the receptionist desk, her bony fingers clacking away on the obsolete typewriter. He cleared his throat.

"Yes?" dragged the gravelly voice.

"Ma'am I need to see someone," asserted Joseph, standing up straight.

"Get a number."

"I've already got one."

The receptionist glared up at him through her archaic glasses, her eyes slightly bulging. "Then go sit down and wait."

"I need to see someone now."

"Impossible."

"But I think there's been a mistake."

"Sit and wait."

"Please ma'am."

Clack, clack, clack.

"I can't just sit and wait."

Clack, clack, clack.

"Please, I have to get out of here!" shouted Joseph.

Clack, clack, clack.

Slamming his hands on the counter, Joseph turned and angrily pushed the nearest chair before returning to his seat.

"I tried to tell you," said the homeless-looking red head.

"Who are you anyway?" snapped Joseph.

"Oh buddy boy, we've been friends for a long time."

"Trust me, hobo, we don't know each other."

"Oh sure we do," smirked the woman. "I was there when you hit your sister behind your mother's back. I was there when you snuck out of your house. I was there when you lied to your girlfriend. I was there when you punched a hole through the wall and cut your wrists. I was definitely there when you swindled deals to your customers."

"That's impossible."

"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

"Please," begged Joseph, "I don't deserve this. I don't want to wait in here."

"I'm afraid nothing to do but wait and wait." The Devil stood and smiled, straightening her tarnished tie and hat. "Don't bother trying the door. The only way out of this room is to come see me. Now if you'll excuse me, I'll see whoevers next," she said as she stood, walking behind the receptionist to the second door. "As for the rest of you, nothing to do but wait and wait. Not that it matters. Your fates are sealed to mine. Joseph, I'll be seeing you when we get around to 506."

Sunday Fog

Jarek Boss



The Sabbath

Olivia Christianson

“Beware! Beware suburbanites! Beware the devil’s grasp!” The pastor shouted from the pulpit. I fidgeted and closed my eyes. Having my hair pulled back gave me a headache and skirts always made me feel so darn awkward. I wasn’t paying Pastor Joran much attention, but I caught words like “eternal torment” and “burning, wretched soul.” It was hot in the small church house, and not one person fanned themselves. Not one person so much as loosened their tie. They all stared at Pastor Joran with awe, hardly breathing.

“Sin!” he shouted, “sin!”

My hand subconsciously made its way to my stomach. The tattoo hidden beneath my blouse felt like a brand. The Pastor was shouting something about death and despair. I fanned myself, golly it was hot.

“What in the name of Betty Crocker do you think you are doing Charity May?” My mother whispered through an imperceptible crack in her lips.

“Gee mama,” I whined, “it’s hotter than Pastor’s fire and brimstone in here.”

People were starting to stare. My mother caught my hand and held it tight.

“I will not have my daughter’s eternal soul dragged down to hell because she can’t exercise a little self control.”

I sighed and looked out the window. A tantalizing breeze made the leaves dance on the trees across the street. My mind started to wander and my eye lids got real heavy. I tried mighty hard to fight it but the heat was against me and my head began to bob.

I was sinking! I was falling into mud and dirt and broken vinyl's and tennis shoes. I looked up and saw Pastor Joran and my mother shaking their heads at me.

"Fire and brimstone, fire and brimstone," Pastor Joran chanted.

"Mama help!" I screamed as I sunk further and further in.

"Now honey, stop being such a baby. I will not have my daughter's eternal soul dragged down to hell for your complaining 'bout everything."

"Fire and brimstone."

"But mama..."

A sheep soared over head.

"Now darling, if you didn't want to be here, ya shouldn't have got yourself that ridiculous tattoo."

I was up to my neck now.

"Fire and brimstone!"

"It's just a tattoo!" I yelled.

I woke up hollering. The sound of my confession echoed through the church; and for once, even Pastor Joran was silent.

